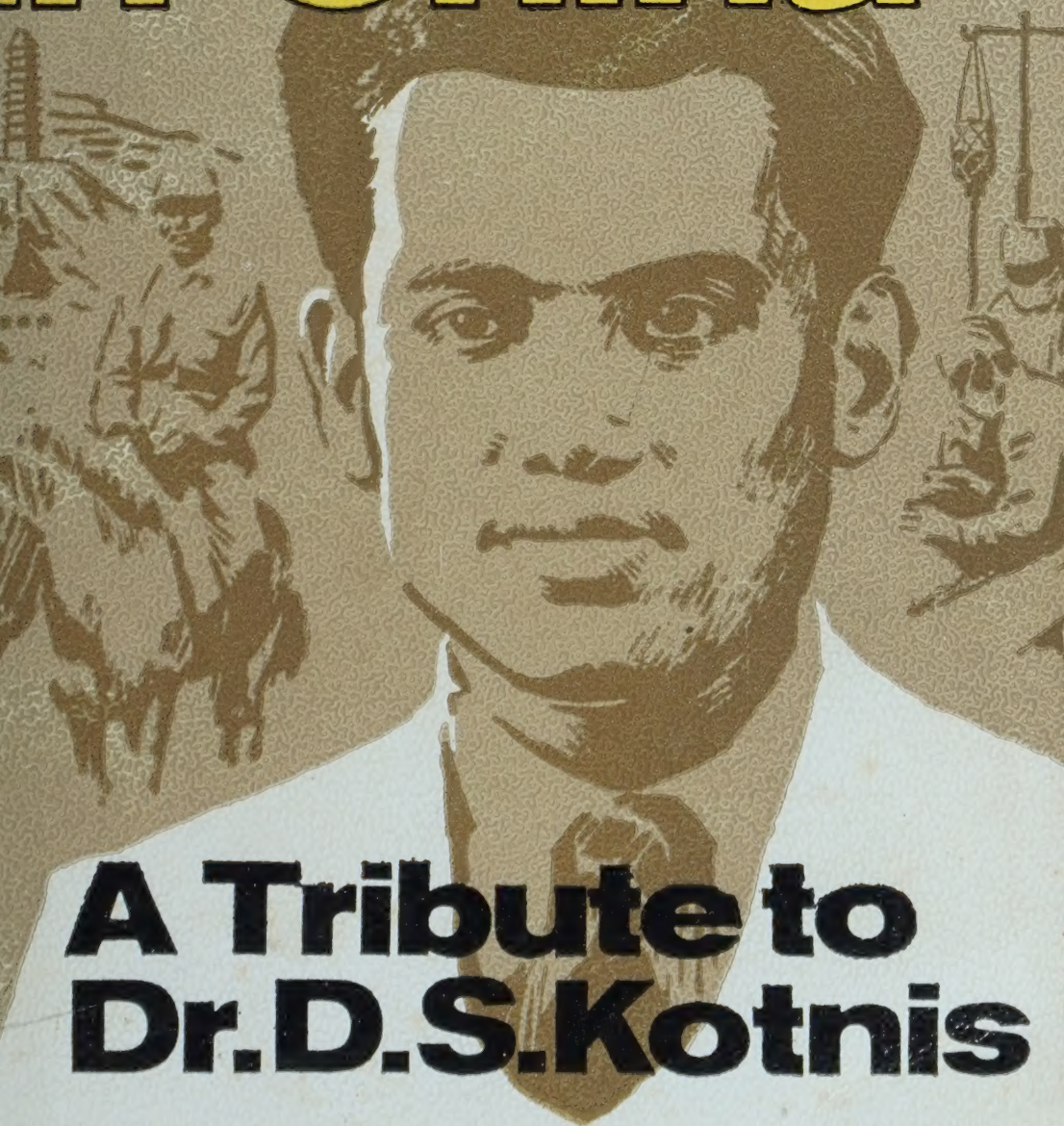


An Indian Freedom Fighter in China



**A Tribute to
Dr.D.S.Kotnis**



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An Indian Freedom Fighter in China

—A Tribute to Dr. D. S. Kotnis

Written by Sheng Xiangong
with assistance from
Lu Jishan and Zhang Changman



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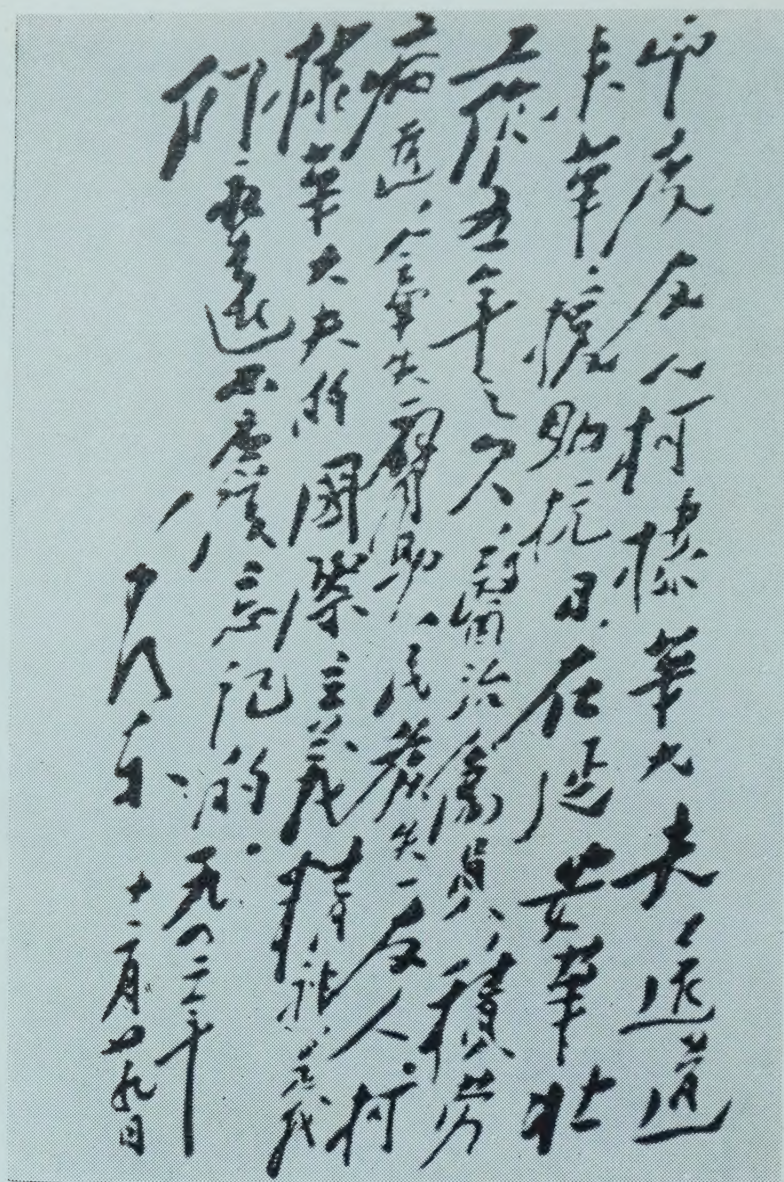
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Dr. D. S. Kotnis, great internationalist fighter.

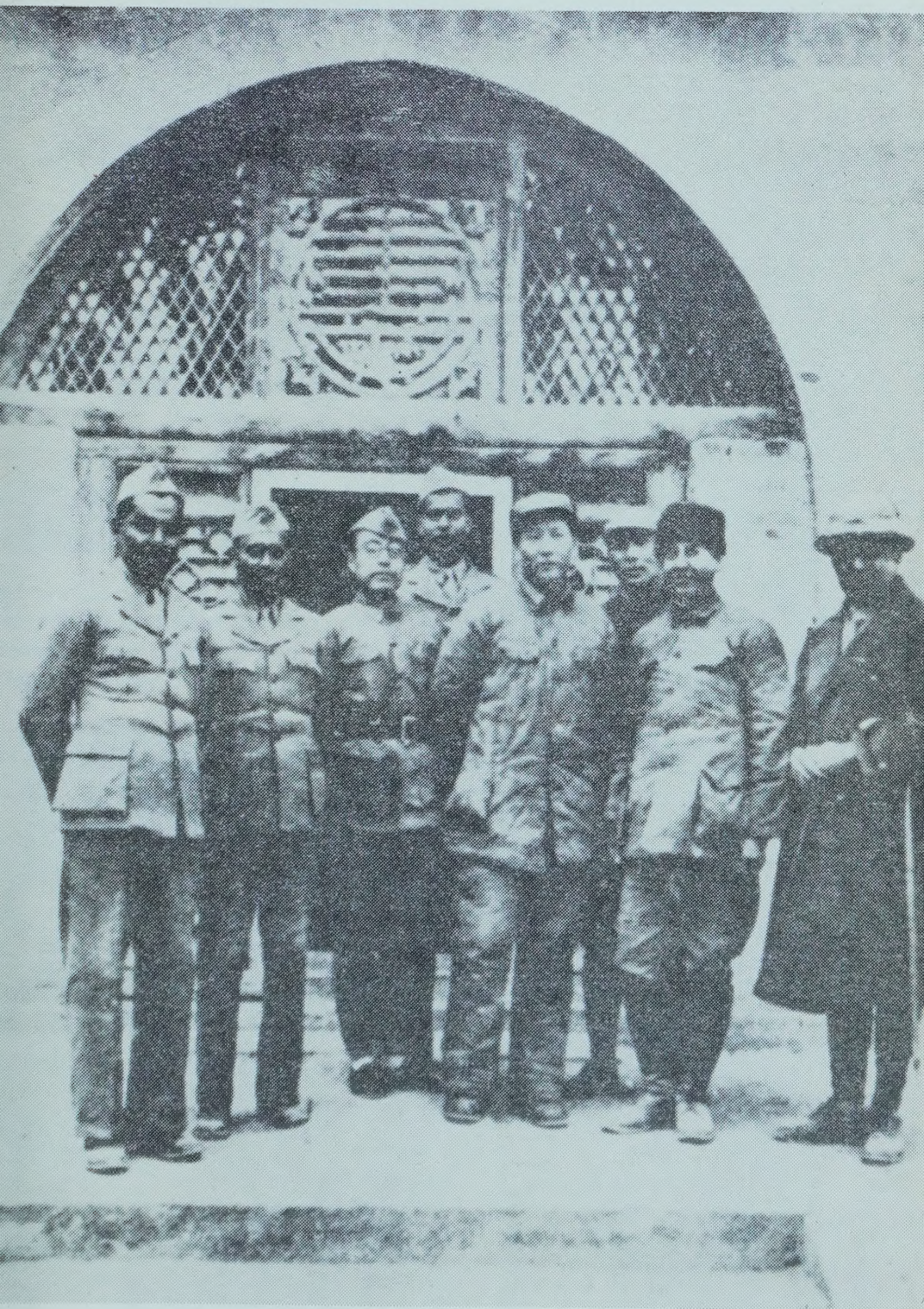


Dr. Kotnis, our Indian friend, came to China from afar to assist us in our War of Resistance. He worked for five years in Yan'an and North China, giving medical treatment to our wounded soldiers and died of illness owing to constant overwork. The army has lost a helping hand, the nation has lost a friend. Let us always bear in mind his internationalist spirit.

Mao Zedong

December 29, 1942

(Elegy in Mao Zedong's own handwriting in memory of Dr. Kotnis.)

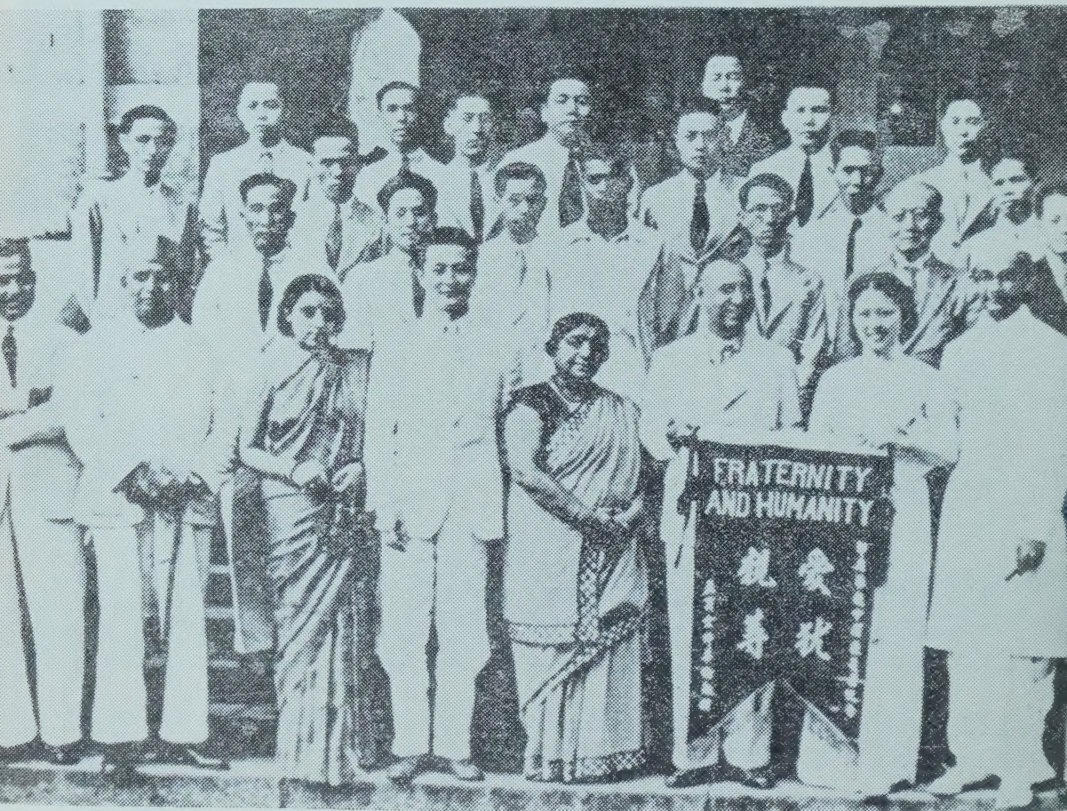


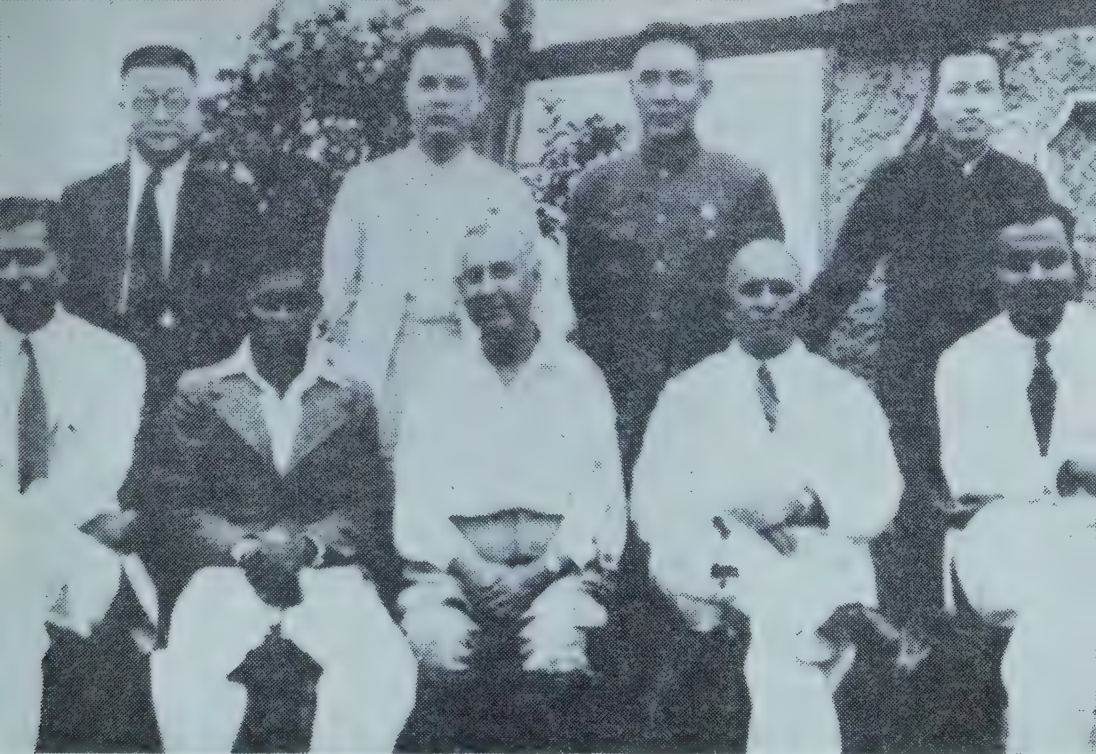
Mao Zedong with the members of the Indian Medical Mission in Yan'an on March 15, 1939. (From left to right): Basu, Kotnis, a member of the Rescue Committee, Mukerji, Mao Zedong, Jiang Qixian, Head of the Public Health Department of the Eighth Route Army, Atal and Cholkar.



Sholapur, India, birth-
place of Dr. Kotnis.

A send-off in Bombay
Indian leaders, Chinese c
sulate officials and resid
Chinese in September 19

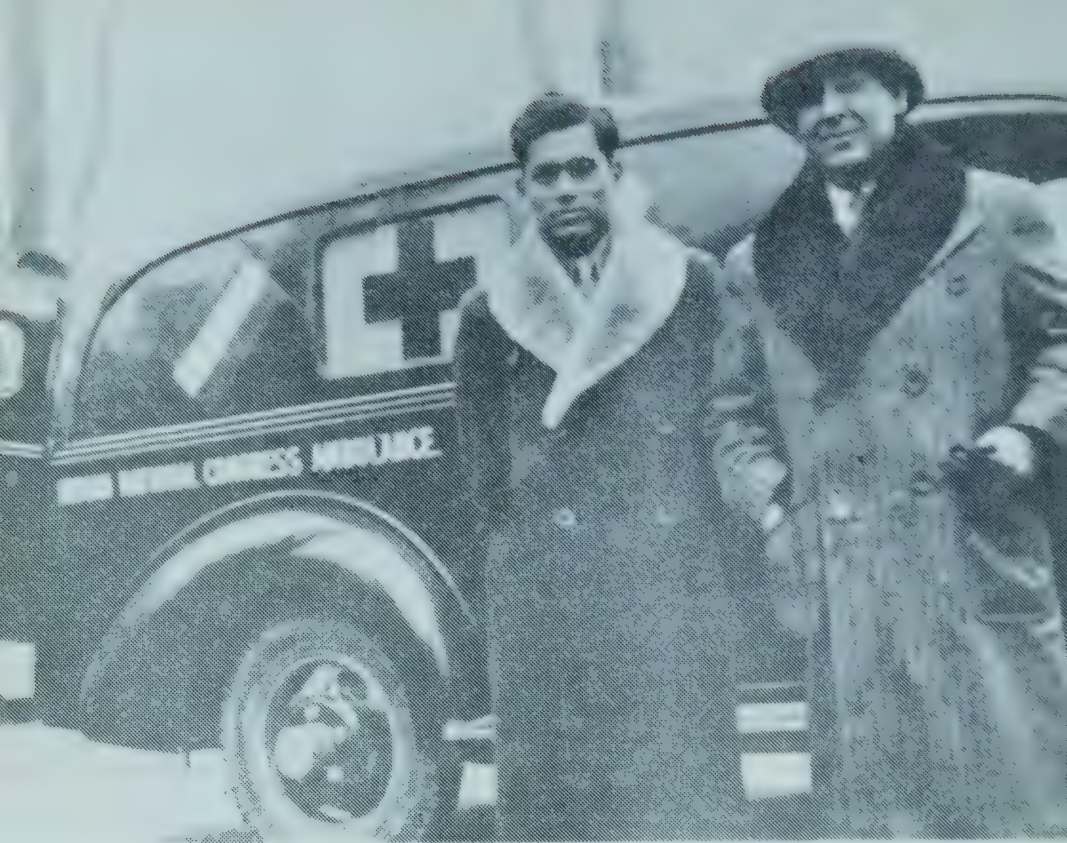




Ye Jianying (*back row, second left*) and the members of the Indian Medical Mission at the Office of the Eighth Route Army in Wuhan, on October 1, 1938. First row, second from left is Dr. Kotnis.

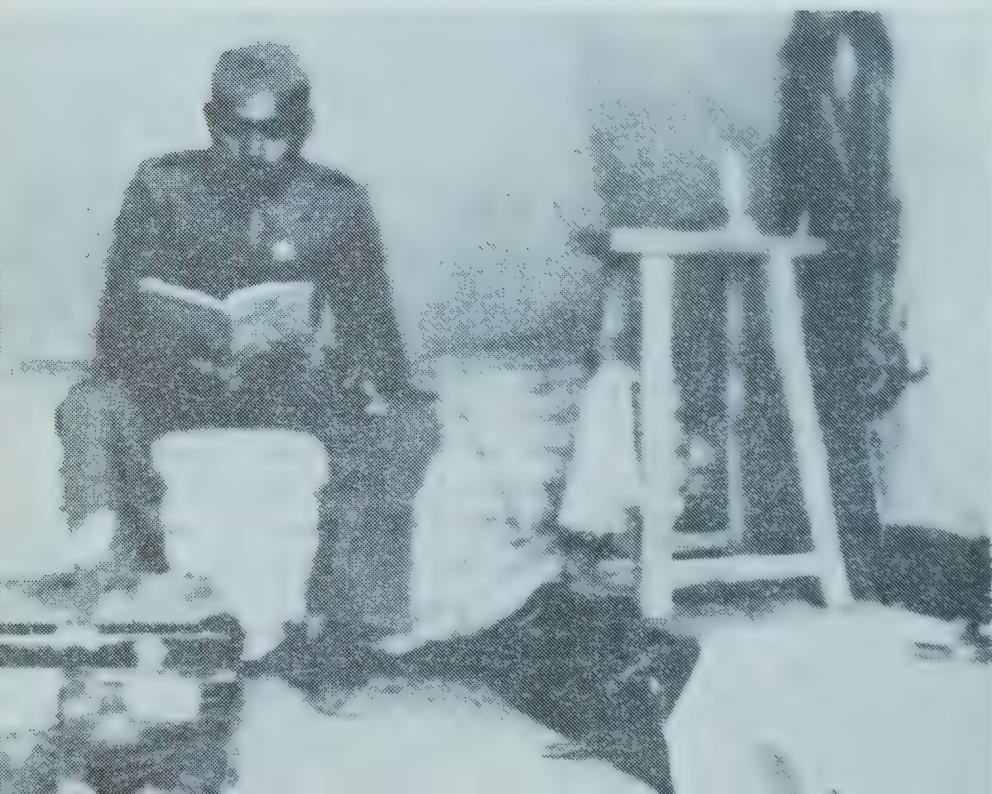
(*From left to right*) Drs. Cholkar, Mukerji, Atal, Kotnis and Basu in Chongqing on their way north in January 1939.





Drs. Kotnis and Atal on their way to Yan'an.

Dr. Kotnis reading a book.



Dr. Kotnis returning
from a house-call.



Dr. Kotnis (*centre, in the foreground*) checking drinking water used by students of the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College.



Dr. Kotnis speaking at a pledge-rally of the troops and people in the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Border Region.



Dr. Kotnis (*right*) operating on a wounded soldier.

Dr. Kotnis laying a wreath on the grave of Dr. Norman Bethune.



抗戰必勝

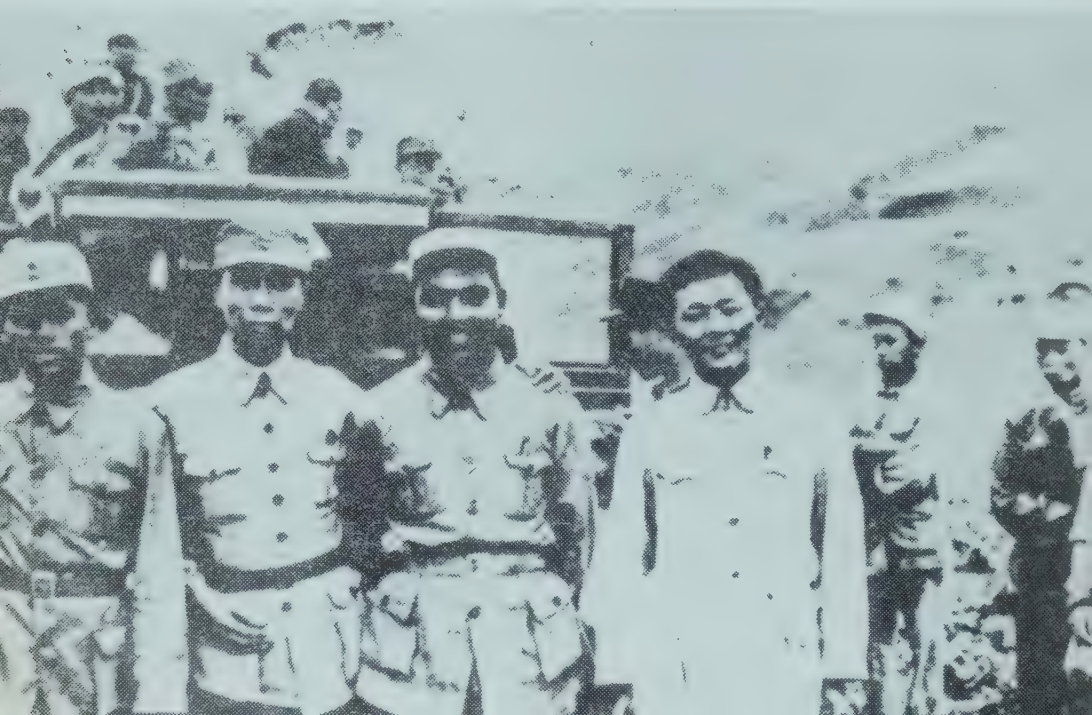
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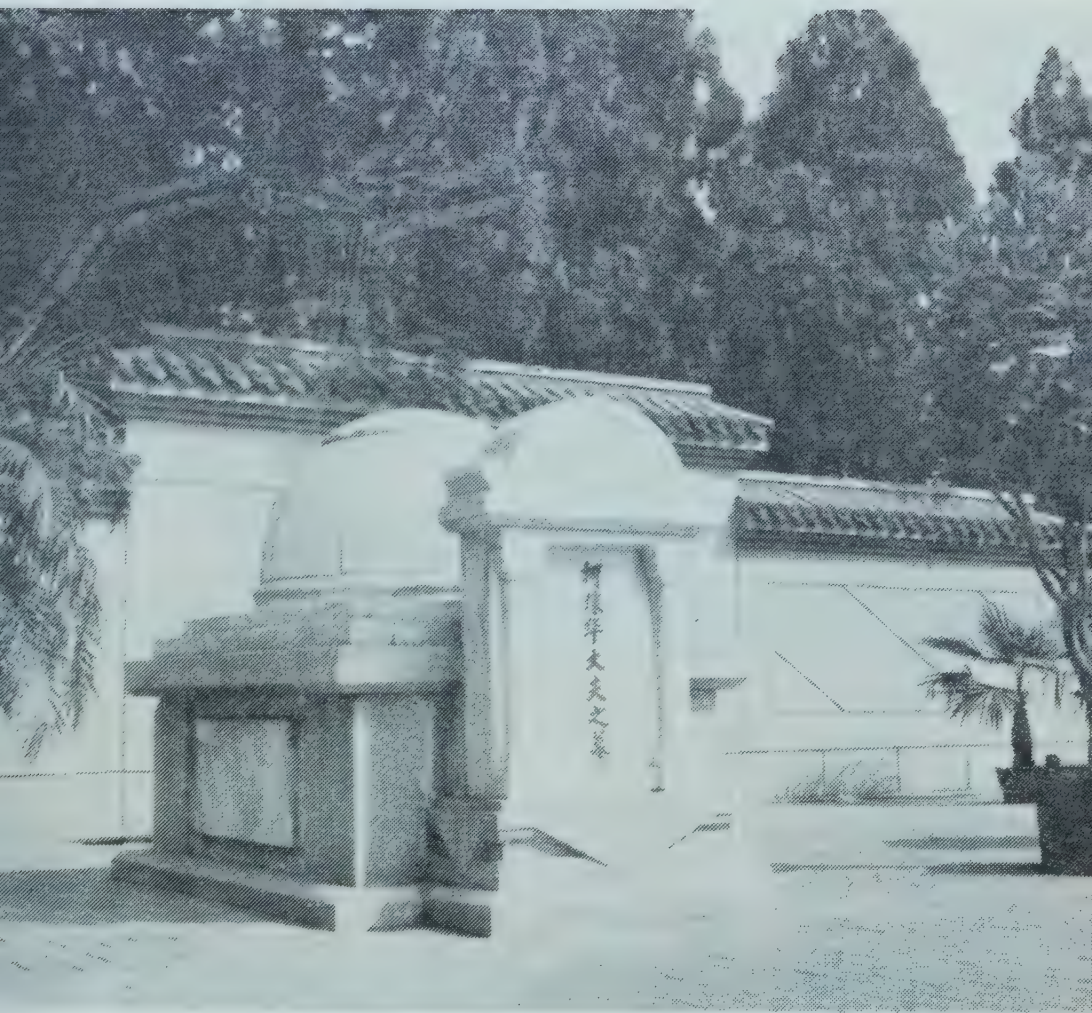
"The War of Resistance Is Bound to Triumph", inscription by Dr. Kotnis for the graduates of the Bethune Medical School.



Drs. Kotnis and
Basu in Yan'an.

In June 1939 a general of the Eighth Route Army (*second from left*) returning to the front after recovery from a wound in the Yan'an Model Hospital, with Drs. Kotnis (*first from left*) and Basu (*second from right*).





Grave of Dr. Kotnis in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province, rebuilt after the founding of New China.



Zhu De with Indian friends (*from left to right*): Mangesh S. Kotnis, Dr. Kotnis' elder brother, and Drs. Cholkar, Basu and Mukerji in Beijing, 1957.

Ye Jianying on a visit to Dr. Kotnis' home during his trip to India in 1958.



Publisher's Note

Doctor Dwarkanath Shantaram Kotnis (1910-42) joined an Indian Medical Mission bound for China to aid the Chinese people in the War of Resistance Against Japan in September 1938 and arrived in Yan'an in February 1939. He then went to the anti-Japanese front behind the enemy lines. In January 1941, he became director of the Bethune International Peace Hospital. He died in Tangxian County, Hebei Province, on December 9, 1942.

Dr. Kotnis is a symbol of the friendship between the great Chinese and Indian nations and a prominent representative of the Indian people, who were taking an active part in the struggle against Japanese militarism and world fascism. Embodying the lofty spirit of internationalism and self-sacrifice, he dedicated his life to the Chinese people's War of Resistance and earned the esteem and love of the Chinese people.

December 9, 1982 marks the 40th anniversary of the death of Dr. Kotnis. In commemorating his brilliant deeds, we are now publishing English and Hindi translations of the Chinese edition of the book *Ke Di-bua Dai Fu (Doctor Kotnis)*, with a number of revisions by the authors. It was compiled by comrades working at the Dr. Kotnis Memorial Hall and is based on the reminiscences of Dr. Kotnis' comrades-in-arms and rel-

atives and on the letters, diaries and notes they have kept. We would like to emphasize the fact that with Dr. Basu's magnanimous permission the authors have quoted a number of passages from his unpublished diaries. They have also made use of the memoirs of Mangesh S. Kotnis, Dr. Kotnis' elder brother, and more than seventy letters Kotnis wrote home, which were kindly presented by Mangesh. All have been most helpful, especially Manorama S. Kotnis, Dr. Kotnis' younger sister, Jiang Yizhen, his comrade-in-arms, and Guo Qinglan, his widow. We would like to avail ourselves of the present opportunity to extend our thanks to them all.

The name of Dr. Kotnis will live forever in the hearts of the Chinese people and his achievements will always illuminate the annals of friendship between the Chinese and Indian peoples.

Foreword

A young 32-year-old Bombay doctor died on December 9 forty years ago in a remote North China village, Ge Gong, in Fuping County, Hebei Province. He was Dr. Dwarakanath Shantaram Kotnis. The place was in a vast tract of hilly land at the eastern foot of the Taihang Mountains which separate Shanxi Province in the west from Hebei Province in the east. The area, then known as the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Border Region, was behind enemy lines, in the process of being liberated from Japanese occupation by the Chinese people, its guerrilla forces and the Eighth Route Army led by the Chinese Communist Party.

Dr. Kotnis was working as the head of the Bethune International Peace Hospital which, like other departments of the local people's government, had no permanent building but shifted from place to place under the existing conditions of war.

When he died of epilepsy in the early hours of a winter morning, he was mourned by his colleagues, patients, neighbourhood people, his Chinese wife, Guo Qinglan, who was at his bedside with their baby son, and beyond by all Chinese people who knew of his selfless devotion to his work. Even people from faraway provinces would recall Dr. Kotnis as one who "had come from afar to China to help us resist Japanese aggression".

Eulogies to Dr. Kotnis at the time of his death came

from the highest leaders of the Chinese people. Chairman Mao Zedong said, "... The army has lost a helping hand, the nation has lost a friend. Let us always bear in mind his internationalist spirit." Zhou Enlai observed "Dr. Kotnis is a symbol of the friendship between the great Chinese and Indian nations and a shining example of the Indian people, who are taking an active part in our common struggles against Japanese militarism and world fascism. His name will live forever in the hearts of the two great nations to whom he dedicated his life." In 1944, Madam Soong Ching Ling, who later became the Honorary Chairman of the People's Republic of China, wrote to me on learning that the life story of Dr. Kotnis was being filmed in India, "Dr. Kotnis' memory belongs not only to our two great nations, but also to the noble ranks of indomitable fighters for the freedom and progress of all mankind. The future will honour him even more than the present — because it was for the future that he fought and died."

Dr. Kotnis' journey to China began in September 1938 when — as a token of friendship and deep sympathy for the Chinese people struggling against foreign aggression — the Indian National Congress, upon the initiative of Jawaharlal Nehru, sent a medical mission to China, headed by Dr. Atal and with supplies and equipment contributed by our people. Subhas Chandra Bose, then President of the Indian National Congress, presided over a mass send-off rally in Calcutta, and even went to Howrah Railway Station to see the doctors off to Bombay from where they were to embark for China. Madam Sarojini Naidu, one of the most popular leaders of the Indian National Congress, came to see the medical mission off to the ship at Pallard Pier, Bombay, on September 1, 1938. A

the end of a mass meeting in Jinnah Hall, she said, "We send you to the war-stricken people of China as messenger of goodwill and sympathy. One or some of you may not return home." How true was her prophecy!

India's medical mission to China had worldwide significance in helping to establish a new kind of relationship between the two countries, linked since ancient times through exchanges of religion, culture and trade. In going beyond these confines, the mission was a forerunner of a new relationship based on worldwide co-operation by anti-fascist peace-loving forces struggling for the ideals of independence and liberation. This was the bedrock on which would rest the future close co-operation of our two countries. It was for this that Dr. Kotnis laid down his life. Young Dr. Kotnis, sharing the hard life of his Chinese comrades and the people of North China during the anti-Japanese war, grew from a simple nationalist into a seasoned fighter against imperialism, an ardent internationalist and a great friend of the Chinese people.

On taking the post as director of the International Peace Hospital in the Wutai mountain region, Shanxi, after the death of the Canadian doctor Norman Bethune, Dr. Kotnis closely studied Chairman Mao Zedong's "In Memory of Norman Bethune" and other works which inspired him further in his service to the people. In July 1942, his long-cherished hope was fulfilled when he was admitted as a member of the glorious Chinese Communist Party.

The development of Dr. Kotnis' world outlook and political ideas can be seen in his letters to me in 1941-42 when he was working in the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Border Region and I at Yan'an. A letter dated April 1, 1942, reads in part, ". . . You know very well politically how

backward I was before reaching Yan'an, my brain full of bourgeois ideas, and though full of national sentimental and hazy ideas of revolutionary methods. During over a year's stay here, living the life of an Eighth Route Army man, ever receiving criticisms from comrades, both during meetings and in personal talks, I have myself been experiencing a good deal of transformation in my character, ideas, etc. I, therefore, consider 1941 as one of the most important years in my life. . . ."

This tribute paid by an honest patriotic Indian to the Eighth Route Army shows that the army was not only an effective fighting force but also an efficient political school.

The esteem with which the Chinese people continue to hold Dr. Kotnis was expressed on December 9, 1976 when the magnificent Memorial Hall at the Bethune International Peace Hospital in Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province, was named in his honour.

We in India, through the All-India Dr. Kotnis Memorial Committee and its various local units, are also carrying forward the task of educating our people about his ideas. Especially on this auspicious occasion of the 40th anniversary of his death, we renew our faith in Dr. Kotnis' spirit of service to the people, anti-imperialism and international solidarity.

Dr. B. K. Basu
March 6, 1981

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Chapter I

The Road to China

I

Dwarkanath Shantaram Kotnis, known as Dr. Ke Di-nua in China, was born in the early hours of October 10, 1910, in Sholapur, a small town in the then Bombay Presidency, which has now become a big city in Maharashtra State.

Kotnis' childhood years were happy. His father, Shantaram Narayan Kotnis, served as a clerk in the Laxmi Cotton Mills and was promoted to a higher supervisory post in the Vishnu Cotton Mills, a new enterprise of the same concern, when Kotnis was two years old. He was a public-spirited man, loved and esteemed by others, and was successively elected member of the Municipality for Sholapur from 1920 to 1938. Eventually he became its Vice-President. Kotnis' mother was a dutiful and virtuous housewife of good family. Like her husband, she possessed the spirit of brotherly love cherished by all. For example, one day his father brought home a young offender from a reformatory. His mother treated the poor child with affection and gradually taught him all the

household chores and, while assisting her in the kitchen garden, the boy soon picked up gardening skills, and lived with the family until he was old enough to get a job in the textile mills where Shantaram worked. Dwarkanath as well as his two brothers and five sisters could not but be strongly influenced by their parents' spirit of love.

Anna (a name by which Shantaram was addressed in the family) was very kind at heart, but being also a strict disciplinarian, he desired all-round development of his children. He provided to them all facilities and never hesitated to send them to renowned educational institutions out of town, though it was very expensive to do so.

Young Kotnis was growing. He was a very bright and mischievous child. Once, he was so naughty that his mother locked him up in the kitchen. At first he was a bit frightened, but upon looking around the room, he became delighted. Through the keyhole of the door, he declared at the top of his voice that he would do something about the milk and butter. His mother had to let him out. When the victor walked out of the kitchen, swollen with arrogance, his mother gave him a smart slap on the back by way of punishment.

He was sent to school when he was four. In his eyes the school was full of strange and wonderful things.

Though mischievous Kotnis was excellent in his studies and when the academic results were published, he often stood first on the list.

In 1920, his father sent him to Northcote High School, a government-run English school.

When Kotnis was very young, now and then there occurred an epidemic in Sholapur that used to take a heavy toll of human lives. Naturally people were scared of infection and would leave their homes in the town, shifting

temporarily to open fields on the outskirts and live in huts for a few days till the epidemic subsided. Kotnis' family also went through this experience. It is most likely that this high incidence of deaths due to plague which Kotnis used to observe as a young boy filled him with sorrow. Since then perhaps his desire to help the people and relieve them of their sufferings lay dormant in his mind.

Hence in 1928, when the time came for him to make a decision, he promptly chose medicine as his future profession.

His aspirations were realized. In 1936, he completed his medical course at the Grant Medical College and obtained his M.B.B.S. He did remarkably well in his studies, so he was asked to stay on and become an assistant in physiology. In 1937, he served as a resident physician. He was of medium height, and what gave people the deepest impression was his thick eyebrows and large, bright eyes, always looking kindly and alert. It was with these eyes that he observed society, through the window of medicine, and diagnosed two of its typical symptoms, namely, the rich were taken ill owing to their luxurious life and the poor died of hunger and cold. With the spirit of brotherly love he had inherited from his parents, he was always ready to give the poor a warm, helping hand.

Kotnis was a resident physician but continued with his studies as assiduously as when he was in college. His elder brother and two younger sisters were happily married, and so the whole family hoped that he would settle down and give some thoughts to marriage, too. But no sooner was the matter taken up than it had to be dropped. In a letter to his father Kotnis conceded that he should undoubtedly act according to their wishes, but that "I haven't still got over my craze of going in for a higher

qualification in surgery. I have arbitrarily fixed January 1940 (probably half-time of my life) as the maximum limit for my attempts to get the desired qualifications."

Two weeks later, he wrote to his father again saying that, in view of the situation at the time, he had to shelve his plan and work to become a general practitioner.

Should he go on with his studies or open a private practice? This was a question he kept asking himself. And the year 1938 had already set in.

2

In 1938, the flames of war were raging across the continents of Europe, Asia and Africa. The German, Italian and Japanese fascists reached out their tentacles to all parts of the world. People everywhere put up a heroic resistance. The Chinese people, then nicknamed "the sleeping lion of the East", stood up on their feet. Under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, they were building themselves into an impregnable fortress and issued a stirring call to resist the war of aggression unleashed by the Japanese imperialists.

Throughout India, next door to China, an anti-Chinese movement developed in scope and depth. Student speeches, donations by urban people, benefit performances put up by art and literary groups and charity bazaars run by commercial circles were gaining momentum. This was a trend that had not only found its way into the streets and lanes but also deep into people's hearts. It was only natural that Kotnis, with his sense of justice, should be caught up in it too. His agitated feelings could no longer be calmed.

Prior to the War of Resistance, China had not been very well known to the outside world. And Kotnis did not know much about it, either. Apart from the smattering of information he had acquired from world geography and history texts, he knew only that China was almost as poor as India and was also under imperialist oppression and exploitation. India suffered from famine year after year, while China was torn apart by its warlords who were perpetually engaged in free-for-all wars. The Chinese stage, built upon guns and corpses, was dominated by one warlord today and another tomorrow, bringing ruin upon the people and the economy. The rulers were too busy fighting among themselves and scrambling for power to consider opposing foreign aggression; nor would they have been able to even if they had wanted to. Of course, Kotnis did not know that besides the wars among the warlords which were ridiculed by people all over the world, a sacred war was going on in China, a people's revolution waged under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, a struggle waged by the Chinese people for independence and democracy, for freedom and happiness.

The Chinese people's War of Resistance Against Japan was a source of encouragement and inspiration to all oppressed nations. And Kotnis saw hope in it. Ever since his country had been occupied by the colonialists, resistance by people of all generations had never stopped. They boycotted foreign goods, which continued to be dumped on India all the same; the workers struck time and again, only to be sacked; the students did the same, with the result that each time some were expelled from school; armed revolts were put down; and even leaders of the peaceful non-cooperation movement started by

Mahata Gandhi were thrown into jail. India had been under colonial rule for several centuries, and China had been subject to partition for nearly a hundred years. Wasn't it high time for this brutal rule and partition to be brought to an end?

After careful consideration, Kotnis arrived at a firm decision. He would go to China, to help the Chinese people.

On November 27, 1937, at the suggestion of Agnes Smedley, a friend of the Chinese and Indian peoples, Zhu De, Commander-in-Chief of the Eighth Route Army, wrote a letter to Indian national leader, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, asking him to send medical supplies and surgeons to help the struggle of the Chinese people. In response to this request, the Indian National Congress adopted at its 52nd Session a resolution to send a medical mission to China immediately and it set up a special committee to collect funds and select personnel for the mission. Kotnis lost no time in presenting his application to the committee. He wrote in a letter, "I consider this decision a turning-point in my life-time." But the chance of his being selected was slim, for the committee stipulated in explicit terms that the mission would be composed of the five best doctors to be chosen from among all the applicants in India, who should be sufficiently experienced in surgery. By this yardstick, Kotnis was not up to measure because he had just graduated two years ago.

¹*The Eighth Route Army:* A people's army led by the Chinese Communist Party during the anti-Japanese war. In order to defeat Japanese imperialism, the Chinese Communist Party, acting in accordance with the agreement reached with the Kuomintang, redesignated the main forces of the Red Army as the Eighth Route Army of the National Revolutionary Army in August 1937, after the Anti-Japanese National United Front was established.

and was working as an assistant in physiology and an ordinary in-patient physician.

It seemed to him that some earnest effort on his part was needed if he were to be selected.

June 29, 1938 was named "China Day" in Bombay for the purpose of promoting the aid-China movement. Kotnis chose that day to write a letter to Dr. Jivraj Mehta, the chairman of the China Aid Committee, expressing his fraternal feelings towards the Chinese and offering to join the medical mission. Of the applications the committee had received, Kotnis' was probably the most touching.

When he calculated that it was about time for the committee to discuss his application, he tried hard to obtain an interview with Dr. Mehta in order to make up for what was deficient in his qualifications by directly imploring the chairman to help him. His efforts bore fruit and the chairman did receive him. Later, in a letter to his father on July 5, 1938, he wrote about the interview:

Dr. Jivraj Mehta pointed out to me the dark side of the picture, which mainly consisted of a risk to life and also included interference with higher studies, losing a probable job, etc. Well, I do not consider the dark side really dark. I have therefore definitely decided to put in my application with the greatest possible exaggeration of my meagre merits and earnestly hope for selection.

I do not know how far you like this latest craze of mine but I do hope that with the same indulgence which you have been showing towards me till now, you will let me have your permission to take this chance of a life-time.

Although he didn't get a positive answer during the interview, Dr. Mehta promised to give his application favourable consideration.

The promise sounded perfunctory to Kotnis, who could not but feel somewhat disappointed. He decided to ask his father to step in and have a talk with the chairman.

As to how his father and the people in Sholapur reacted to his request to go to China, Mangesh, his elder brother whom he held in esteem, wrote thus in his memoirs:

When Anna came to know about Dwarka's intention to proceed to China with the medical unit, his first reaction was totally to disapprove of the proposal. Quite understandably he feared that a handful of inexperienced young medicos like Dwarka without any equipment worth mentioning would make a ridiculous show and become a laughing-stock to the rest of the world. It would have been a different matter if they were to proceed to work on some well-organized European front with the active support of the Government of India. Even from a purely philanthropic point of view, was not there enough scope for him to be of service to his own countrymen who were in equally worse plight? He even hoped that a senior and experienced person like Dr. Jivraj Mehta would try to dissuade Dwarka from this contemplated adventure.

However, on receipt of Dwarka's own letter in his most persuasive manner, he wrote in reply, "... Personally I am always for enterprise and can appreciate your determination.... I am glad to say that your mother is not slow in granting her assent to your venture.

"I am thinking of coming over to Bombay and shall be certainly very happy to see Dr. Mehta. In the meanwhile you may have an interview with him again to give your decision to him." When Anna returned from Bombay after seeing Dwarka, and meeting Dr. Jivraj Mehta, he seemed to be satisfied that the prominent leaders of the Indian National Congress were solidly behind the move to send the medical mission to China and that the project was well financed. Further, the mission was to be led by such veterans as Dr. M. Atal who had rendered similar service in Spain during the Civil War, and Dr. Cholkar, an eminent surgeon from Nagpur.

The news that Dwarkanath had been selected to be one of the five doctors who were to form the medical mission to China sponsored by Pandit Jawaharlal himself, spread swiftly all over Sholapur and took the city by surprise.

The local Congressmen were piqued to see that Anna, who had all these days kept himself aloof from the 'Congress Party' in the city Municipality, had the courage to offer his son in a national cause at great sacrifice. Those of his own party on the other hand began to wonder what made him agree to the foolish idea of his son going on this fool's errand. It was only those who formed his intimate circle of friends who could realize the depth of feeling and incessant struggle between various sentiments that must have preceded before he could finally persuade himself to give his permission to his beloved son to join the mission. But even they had little idea what great sacrifice was actually involved until a few months after the mission left for China.

Appropriately enough it was the Sholapur Medical

Association who were the first to appreciate the great honour that was done to the city by Dwarkanath's selfless act in joining the medical mission. They held a reception in his honour, praised his self-sacrificing spirit, gave him their blessings and presented him with some medicines and drugs in token of their sympathy for the cause....

While his friends and admirers were congratulating and praising him which moved his heart, it was the send-off arranged by the members of his community in Sholapur that was most touching. Most of the members had seen Dwarka grow up from a small boy to become a young doctor and had very high expectations of him. Speaker after speaker rose to say a few words but most of them were so overwhelmed that they had to stop short in their speeches. Finally, when Dwarka rose to reply, he completely broke down and tears swelled in his eyes. The only words he could manage to speak out were, "I will try my utmost to live up to the great expectations you have of me and never belie the faith reposed in me. Thank you, dear friends."

In the meanwhile, my sisters Hira and Mahalsa had arrived in Sholapur, each with her husband and daughter. There was a family group photograph taken on the occasion. Dear mother gave Dwarka a silver tumbler inscribed "Remember your mother". As it turned out later on Dwarka always carried the photo with him and used the tumbler to drink water from. He then took leave, with a heavy heart, of not only the members of the family, but of the servants and the neighbours as well. All those who could do so flocked to the station to see him off.

He was profusely garlanded at the station and as the

train slowly moved out a veritable sea of hands rose from the crowd to bid him farewell. Dwarka waved back with his handkerchief, took final look at the house from a distance as the train passed by and bravely held back the tears that collected in his eyes. Soon he was talking merrily with those of us who were accompanying him to Bombay — as if he was only returning back to college after a long vacation.

At the end of August, the members of the medical mission gathered in Bombay. They were Dr. M. Atal from Allahabad, leader of the mission; Dr. M. Cholkar from Nagpur, deputy leader of the mission; Dr. D. Mukerji and Dr. B. K. Basu both from Calcutta; and Dr. D. S. Kotnis from Sholapur. The former two were veterans in the medical profession and the other three were young men all below thirty.

On the afternoon of August 31, the Chinese residents in Bombay held a farewell banquet in their honour at Taj Mahal Hotel. On the evening of the same day, the Bombay Provincial Congress Committee and the local labour organization held a mass rally in Jennah Hall to send them off. When the chairman of the rally referred to them as unofficial ambassadors, as ambassadors of the people, all the participants responded with a warm standing ovation. College students, in particular, ran up to the rostrum and surrounded the members of the mission to honour them. They called Kotnis and Basu, who were the youngest of the mission, their brilliant representatives. When the mill workers from Parel entered the hall, the excitement reached its peak. In order to demonstrate their determination to support the Chinese people's anti-Japanese struggle, they had walked five kilometres to the

venue. They filed into the hall, flying banners, singing patriotic songs, and shouting slogans of brotherhood with the Chinese people, whereupon the hall was in a tumult again, with everybody clapping and joining in the shouting.

Cheers rang out and the mission members received one garland after another. At midnight, September 1, 1938, the medical mission left Bombay on board the P. & O. liner, *S. S. Rajputana*, carrying with them the friendship of the Indian people.

3

Over-excited by the send-off, Kotnis hadn't been able to fall asleep all night. He was up next morning when the first gleam of dawn appeared on the horizon. It was a windless day, the sea was as smooth as a mirror. Staring at the surface of the sea, he seemed to see the images of the two largest nations of the East, India and China. They were alike in so many ways! Both were vast in territory, abundant in natural resources and large in population; both had a long history and an industrious and courageous people. However, in recent times the two countries had grown similar in other ways, too. With the discovery of the sea route to the East by Europeans in the fifteenth century and with the rapid expansion of navigation by the colonialists, the struggle for supremacy spread like fire to Asia. The conquerors kept changing. In the sixteenth century it was the Portuguese, in the seventeenth century the Netherlanders, and in the eighteenth century the British. Whoever they were, they never failed to invade China when they had India under their occupation,

or vice versa. It seemed that in the eyes of the colonialists the two countries were twins.

In the early 16th century Portugal began invading India and in 1510 conquered Goa, making it the capital of their possessions in India. Six years later, the first Portuguese merchant ships sailed all the way to China's Guangdong Province, and in 1557, the Portuguese occupied Macao. Merchant ships, indeed! They were actually pirate ships, occupying islands, plundering travellers and robbing the common people. The Portuguese colonialists opened the doors of India and China at the same time, and from then on they could come in and out of the two countries freely. In 1849, British colonialists replaced the Portuguese and occupied all parts of India. Nine years earlier they had unleashed the ignominious Opium War against China. The two countries had been linked together by religion, culture and trade long before the Christian era. Now, with the lapse of twenty centuries the two peoples had become closely linked in their lot. Being victims of imperialist aggression, both of them had put up heroic resistance to win independence. Although Kotnis had never been to China, he felt a special kind of closeness to his Chinese brothers.

He remembered that when he was young, he often heard his father say that the affairs of a friend were more important than one's own. Then what about the affairs of a brother? Much more important, of course. He also remembered the words of Mrs. Naidu, who presided over the send-off meeting held in Bombay: "It is a dangerous task you are undertaking. You might even have to give your life, along with your Chinese comrades. . . ." Yes, he was prepared for the worst. But at the moment his

thoughts were concentrated on how to help China to fight the aggressors. Those who were on the same trip with him already had a strong feeling that Kotnis was availing himself of every chance to make preparations for the forthcoming undertaking.

Before the long journey came to an end, Kotnis had acquired two nicknames: the "Scholar" and the "Colonel". How did this come about?

On September 2, 1938, news about a China-bound medical mission swept the steamer *Rajputana*. The passengers on board, whether travelling first class or steerage, all came to congratulate the members of the mission. Atal, as leader of the medical mission, acknowledged the congratulations on behalf of the others. It happened that two of the passengers were Chinese, an economist named Ji Chaoding and a young engineering student named Wang, who insisted on meeting all the members of the mission. It would have been ungracious not to see them, so Kotnis and Basu went to the deck and met them.

The economist was a man with a wide forehead. He was well-informed about developments in China. He had a map of China with him, on which he had made all sorts of markings. Spreading the map before them, he explained, with considerable knowledge of the subject, the latest deployments of the Chinese troops. He became all the more interested when he learned that some of the doctors had read books by Edgar Snow and Agnes Smedley. He moved his finger here and there on the map, enjoying the pleasure of talking about the Chinese Communist Party and Mao Zedong, Zhu De and Zhou Enlai, about Yan'an, the Eighth Route Army and the Anti-Japanese United

Army² that was carrying on an arduous struggle in the three provinces in the Northeast. It seemed as if the economist had just returned from those places, and he spoke so convincingly and vividly that Kotnis was fascinated.

After that conversation, Kotnis and the two Chinese passengers became close friends. Without ceremony he asked the economist and the engineer to sign an agreement with him, to give him daily lectures on the Chinese language.

While the steamer was sailing on the Arabian Sea, Kotnis' heart was already in China following the square Chinese characters he had learned. During the seventeen days on board, Kotnis, pencil and notebook in hand, would not let a day pass without learning something from his friends.

The forest at Cochin-Travancore with its tall coconut trees standing out here and there slid past; he continued to study.

Colombo, the famous Southeast Asian tourist city, beautiful and clean, slid past, and still he continued.

Pulau Pinang, with its beautiful waterfall park and its high mountains, slid past, and he was still learning.

Seeing that he was studying those square characters so assiduously, a fellow traveller couldn't help cracking a joke with him. "Hey, Kotnis," he said, "do you want to become a specialist in the Chinese language?"

"I really don't deserve such a title," he answered in all

²*The Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army*: When Japan invaded and occupied northeast China in 1931, the Chinese Communist Party called on the people to take up arms to fight the Japanese invaders and organized anti-Japanese guerrilla units and the Northeast People's Revolutionary Army, which included part of the Communist-led Anti-Japanese Volunteers. These anti-Japanese armed forces were later reorganized into the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army.

earnestness in the Chinese he had just learned, a cross between the literary and the colloquial. "The best I can make is a scholar." What he really meant to say was that he was striving to be a diligent student of the Chinese language.

Hence, his nickname the "Scholar". It grew wings and was soon on the lips of the friendly and mirthful overseas Chinese on board the ship.

At the end of the seventeen days of travelling, he had already compiled a handbook of vocabulary in three languages — Hindi, English and Chinese. He could now manage short and simple dialogues, but he was not yet able to cope with all situations without a hitch. On September 18, the day after their arrival in Guangzhou, Kotnis made an exhibition of himself with his Chinese language. They went to a restaurant intending to have chicken, and it happened that they did not know how to say it in Chinese. Kotnis searched for the word in his handbook, but in vain. He had collected nothing but medical terms and some names of places and people. Then, Mukerji hit upon an idea and drew a rooster on a piece of paper. What they got in return was grilled frogs — a well-known Guangdong dish.

Kotnis jumped at the chance, as he had done many times before, and preached, "You see? You can't even get anything to eat if you don't learn Chinese."

His other nickname "Colonel" came about thus.

Dr. Ji Chaoding had told a story about a medical worker of the Eighth Route Army working at the front. Kotnis was inspired by this story. If a field medical worker could pass the military test too, he would be able to render a much greater service. So he made the suggestion to their leader Atal that they start to have some sort

of military training so as to be better prepared for their future work. As he had undergone such training at school, it followed that he should become the drillmaster. His suggestion won the approval of the leader and the support of the other members of the mission. In the height of summer, they set about their military training on the deck under Kotnis' instruction. Nobody had expected that he would take the job so seriously, and even their leader, Dr. Atal, was not exempt from his strict control. Hence his second nickname.

4

Foreign friends who came to aid China during the Chinese people's anti-Japanese war had first, almost without exception, to make their acquaintance with the Kuomintang, for it was the party in power. Ironically, through contact with reality, many of them came to recognize the Kuomintang's true features and ended by completely ignoring this party which claimed to represent the Chinese people and also the government under its control. Consequently, these people entered into an unbreakable bond with the Chinese Communist Party which was constantly vilified by the Kuomintang. The Aid-China Medical Mission from India was no exception.

When the mission arrived in Guangzhou on the afternoon of September 17, only Atal and Basu had a definite destination in mind — to go to Yan'an and join the Eighth Route Army there. The other three members thought that the moment they arrived in China they would be able to put their skills to full use in assisting the Chinese nation. After a six-day stay in Guangzhou, they trav-

elled north by a convoy of ambulance to Changsha, which they reached on the 25th. There they were incorporated into the No. 15 Curative Unit of the China Red Cross. Four days later they continued their journey to Wuhan, which was then the seat of the Kuomintang government.

After their arrival in Wuhan, the members of the mission, eager to render service to the Chinese people's War of Resistance, finally got their assignments after repeated application. Basu and Cholkar were sent to the No. 64 Rear Hospital, while Atal, Kotnis and Mukerji were sent to another army hospital. It was there that Kotnis came across something intolerable.

In the hospital, Kotnis had been treating a wounded soldier with medicine sent from a third country. After a period of treatment, the patient's condition continued to deteriorate instead of turning for the better. Kotnis was puzzled, because not long ago he had used the same medicine in India and it had proved most effective. Why should the result be different here? The crooked ways and means of getting rich which prevailed in Wuhan put him on the alert. He examined the ampoule closely and discovered that it had been sealed a second time and that the colour of the liquid had faded. He quietly asked a friend of his to make a chemical analysis, which proved that distilled water had been substituted for the original. Taking the matter seriously, he reported it to the head of the hospital, only to be rewarded with an ungracious reply. The head, accustomed to such things, said, "It's no secret. People at both higher and lower levels have been collaborating to make money by selling medicine from other countries on the black market. Compared with Chongqing, things aren't so bad here."

In half a month, Kotnis experienced numerous instances

of such a nature. He was indignant when he said to Basu, "If we are to work along with such people, we are doomed to fail."

"Be patient. Things will get better soon." Full of confidence, Basu tried to soothe him. Of course, Basu had reason to feel confident. Madam Soong Ching Ling had met them in Guangzhou and had told him that they could get in touch with the Communist Party when they arrived in Wuhan, for Zhou Enlai, who enjoyed high prestige among the people, Dong Biwu and Ye Jianying were all there.

The time for the meeting with the Chinese Communists came at last. On the evening of September 30, Dong Biwu and Ye Jianying held a banquet at Sichuan Hotel in honour of all the members of the Aid-China Medical Mission from India.

When the evening lights were turned on, the banquet began.

Compared to the dishes offered by the Kuomintang officials, this banquet was hardly better than a simple meal. Accompanying the banquet, there was no ball and there were certainly no coquettish ladies. Music? Yes, but it was in the form of songs, with everybody taking part in the singing. Last but not least, there was the personality and bearing of the hosts. None of the members left the hotel without being impressed by their own experience at this banquet. What was so impressive about it? Here is a passage from Basu's diary:

Oh! How can I describe the joyous feelings we all had during the dinner this evening at Sichuan Hotel arranged by the world famous Eighth Route Army leaders? I have poor control over English language. But

language was not a barrier to the understanding of each other's heart. There was the weather-beaten fiery American with the spirit of Indian freedom in her heart, Miss Agnes Smedley, translating every word we spoke — even more than that — into fluent German. Then there was the cute and sharp German lady — Mrs. Anna Wang rendering them to Chinese for the benefit of our hosts: General Ye Jianying, Kai Feng, Dong Biwu and Dr. Wang Bingnan, the husband of the anti-Hitlerite “Aryan” — Anna. The genial and robust Russian manager of Tass Agency, Com. Rogoff added the required humour and laugh to the company. As toasts followed toasts beginning with the Independence of India, we were soon mingling our full throated voices to songs sung in English (*Red Flag*), French (*La Marseilles*), Russian (*Air Force Song*), Chinese (*Crossing of Yellow River by the Eighth Route Army*) and German (*The Internationale*). After we sang the national Baude-maturam song, I complied by singing the famous Bengali march song by the revolutionary poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. When this piece was rendered into Chinese, Gen. Ye said wonderingly, “Do they allow you to sing this in India?” He was one of the leaders of the famous Canton Commune and could speak English. When I conveyed directly to him the greetings of the Indian Communist Party, he raised his closed fist in acknowledgement. Com. Dong Biwu, with drooping moustache, was adding jest to the atmosphere of true Internationalism that pervaded the wooden cabin of Sichuan Hotel. He warned us with mock seriousness at our shyness to sing, “The Eighth Route Army is earnest in singing. You are earnest in serving the Eighth Route Army and therefore if you don't want to be disqualified,

you must also sing!" Small and sickly looking Com. Kai Feng smiled pleasingly when he learned that our expenses are borne by the fund raised mostly in small coins by the Indian masses.

It was truly an international gathering, into the spirit of which we are for the first time invited. The differences of languages, of colour did not affect in any way the close proximity of hearts and intimacy of feelings. What a contrast with the dry wooden atmosphere we experienced with the KMT officials.... As we came back to the Lutheran mission late at night, we felt a longing to be with the Eighth Route Army at the Shanxi fronts heroically fighting the Japanese directed by Gen. Zhu De and Com. Mao Zedong.

The banquet inspired the members of the mission and at the same time struck them as something new. They naturally wished to see how the ordinary personnel were faring. In order to satisfy their curiosity, Ye Jianying invited them to visit the office at noon the next day and take potluck with the personnel there.

The lunch was prepared strictly in accordance with the meal standard in the Eighth Route Army — eight cents for lunch per person. What could you get for eight cents in Wuhan with its sky-rocketing prices? The meal couldn't have been simpler, and yet Kotnis enjoyed it very much. What filled him with enthusiastic admiration was that, while living in such a luxurious city as Wuhan, none of the leaders or soldiers working at the Eighth Route Army Office complained about their food. It was a rigorous standard! Was this the kind of standard the Eighth Route Army applied to govern itself?

Again he was deeply impressed. When they were

leaving the office, he couldn't help embracing the comrades of the Eighth Route Army.

After that his heartfelt admiration became increasingly evident. For several days in succession, he would express praise of the Communist Party and the Eighth Route Army to anyone he bumped into and, whenever there was a chance, he would ask Atal or Basu, "Why don't we ask to see Zhou Enlai who is in charge of the office?"

In fact, the office had arranged for a meeting long before Kotnis put forward his suggestion. Zhou Enlai on his part also wished to see them very much. But he was too busy, so the meeting had been postponed again and again. It was not until the afternoon of October 7, following a press conference, that Zhou Enlai managed to see them.

When the members of the mission arrived at the office, the conference was not yet over. The moment they entered the hall, Zhou Enlai knew who they were. He greeted them with a warm look and waited for them to take their seats in the last row before he resumed answering the journalists' questions.

Kotnis fixed his eyes on Zhou Enlai. With his expressive face and his eyes full of wisdom, Zhou gave every participant the impression that he was looking attentively at him. And once he did look, his look was charismatic. Neither haughty nor humble, he spoke cheerfully and humorously to the circle of journalists.

From time to time Zhou Enlai's answers would be cut short by telephone calls or by requests for instructions from his assistants who kept hurrying in and out of the room. Indeed, he was much too busy. He had to answer the questions put by the journalists, listen carefully to the interpreter's rendition of his answers into English and

make prompt corrections where the interpretation was not very accurate. To Kotnis the conference seemed noisy and confusing, and yet Zhou Enlai remained calm and collected, speaking now with irony, now with humour. He was full of energy and very knowledgeable. No question could stump him and he never once digressed after answering telephone calls and giving instructions to his assistants. He was really a great revolutionary, and as far as Kotnis could tell, no one could surpass him in wisdom, intelligence, wit, or knowledge.

The conference came to an end. As the journalists were leaving the office, Zhou Enlai walked towards the last row, stretching out his hands to greet the Indian doctors.

Atal introduced his colleagues one by one. When he came to Kotnis, Zhou patted the latter on his shoulder and commented, "I can see you're quite young. How old are you?"

"I'm..." Hardly expecting such a question, the lively Kotnis suddenly felt tongue-tied. He had to calm down before answering, "...twenty-eight."

"Wonderful!" said Zhou, holding his hand. "You can do much more work for friendly exchange between the Chinese and Indian peoples."

The warm remark instantly put Kotnis at his ease.

The members of the mission sat around Zhou Enlai and felt at home. Although he had just concluded a press conference, Zhou didn't show any trace of tiredness. He chatted with them about China and India, mentioning the Himalayas that both linked and separated the two countries.

On behalf of his fellow members, Atal expressed the wish to work in the Eighth Route Army. Zhou was delighted. He took Atal's hand and said, "Thank you very

much! Our Eighth Route Army and New Fourth Army³ are really in great difficulties and need your help badly. Not very long ago, the Canadian Doctor Bethune led a medical mission there and they have scored outstanding achievements at the front. You will be very welcome. But," his tone changed as he crossed his arms in front of his chest and grasped his shoulders with his hands and said thoughtfully, "we have to think it over first. How do you like the idea of continuing to work in the Kuomintang area for a while?"

This suggestion was quite beyond their expectation. Neither Kotnis, Atal, nor Basu could understand it, so they asked, "But why?"

"Taking the united front into consideration, it would probably be more appropriate for you to do so."

Kotnis was not convinced. He wondered why it should be impossible for them to join the Eighth Route Army directly. Only later did he come to appreciate Zhou Enlai's far-sightedness. In China, the right-wingers in the Kuomintang were cooking up pretexts for undermining the anti-Japanese united front and creating anti-Communist friction.

Three days later, at a banquet given by the Aid-China Medical Detachment from Java, they met Zhou Enlai and Ye Jianying again. Besides the comrades from the Office of the Eighth Route Army and the Indian Medical Mission

³*The New Fourth Army*: A people's army under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party during the anti-Japanese war. In October 1937, in accordance with the agreement reached with the Kuomintang, the Chinese Communist Party began to concentrate the Red Army guerrilla units operating in the eight provinces of Jiangxi, Guangdong, Hunan, Hubei, Henan, Anhui, Zhejiang and Fujian and redesignated them as the New Fourth Army of the National Revolutionary Army.

who attended the banquet were Kuomintang army and government VIPs and celebrities from the medical circles. The guests had their eyes on two people — Zhou Enlai and Ye Jianying. Sometimes the two chatted quietly with the foreign friends sitting beside them; sometimes they left their seats to propose toasts to other guests. When Zhou Enlai approached Kotnis and Basu, they were talking in a very low voice with the German journalist Anna Wang.

“We’ll feel proud to have made Zhou Enlai’s acquaintance when we recall this occasion twenty years later,” said Anna Wang.

Basu raised his head and said, “Why should it take such a long time! I feel proud right now.”

Now Zhou was with them, proposing a toast:

“To India’s independence!”

“To China’s victory in its war of resistance!” chorused the three of them.

“Cheers!” The four clinked their glasses, and four pairs of eyes gazed at each other. Nobody emptied his or her glass.

Zhou left them and went towards other guests. Kotnis followed him with his eyes and then turned to Basu and the journalist and nodded his head emphatically.

5

Within a week, at the end of October, the Kuomintang abandoned Guangzhou and Wuhan. The Indian Medical Mission withdrew to the city of Yichang in western Hubei Province.

Air-raid warnings followed by bombing became a way

of life. It took the enemy bombers less than an hour to take off from Wuhan and reach Yichang where they dropped dozens of bombs. When there was a bright moon hanging in the sky, nobody dared to close his eyes the whole night.

From October 22 to November 16, the doctors spent 26 days in Yichang, working in the No. 1 Military Base Hospital and the No. 86 Red Cross Hospital. The wounded had been brought there from Wuhan but many did not survive the journey, as Japanese planes bombed and strafed the boats carrying the wounded. And Japanese troops were moving westward. The Indian doctors had no choice but to join in the withdrawal. They unanimously asked to be sent to Yan'an right away, where they were most needed. This request they formally conveyed to the Kuomintang government.

After the medical mission had withdrawn from Yichang to Chongqing, the war-time capital of the Kuomintang government, Basu wrote down in his diary the Kuomintang authorities' first reaction to their request: "We are in a somewhat delicate situation in this drab city and in our relations with the philistine officials."

And that was how things stood. After the routine welcoming ceremony and visits on their arrival in Chongqing, the officials didn't show up again. Their request to go to Yan'an was ignored.

Seventeen days passed without anyone coming to see them. This was obviously a warning to drop their request to go to Yan'an.

Kotnis' mood was as gloomy as the atmosphere over the city of Chongqing. He grew impatient and began to urge Atal to take action. "Why don't we lodge a protest against the Kuomintang government?" he asked. "Are

we deprived of our freedom? Why don't we ask the Office of the Eighth Route Army for help?"

Atal, who was more experienced, knew very well that such a protest would be groundless, because their request had not yet been turned down. Approach the Office of the Eighth Route Army? That wouldn't be the proper thing to do. While attending a memorial meeting held the other day by the Xinhua News Agency in honour of the comrades who had been killed by Japanese bombing, he learned that the Kuomintang had already presented quite a few hard nuts for the office to crack. So, every time Kotnis urged him to act, he would say, "Patience. Have a little more patience."

But there is a limit to everything. When Atal finally realized that the Kuomintang did indeed mean to let their request die of itself by avoiding to see them and not taking time to respond, his patience was exhausted. He decided to lead all his members to the Ministry of Health and once again advance their formal request to go to Yan'an.

Dr. F. C. Yan, the minister, who came out to receive them readily promised to comply with their request and promptly called for arrangements to be made to such effect. When they asked him to inform the Eighth Route Army Office of the matter then and there, he immediately instructed one of his secretaries to handle it. It didn't take the secretary long to return with the answer that he had failed to get in touch with the man in charge of the office. They asked him to try the *New China Daily*. He left and came back with the same answer. It then dawned upon Kotnis and the others that this was an effort to stall them! Atal stood up and told the minister that that secretary of his was to go along with the mission to the Eighth Route Army Office the next day and personally

inform the office that the Ministry of Health had granted their request.

The next day, Dong Biwu met all the members of the mission at the Eighth Route Army Office and expressed his cordial welcome of their planned trip to Yan'an. He said that he and Zhou Enlai had learned about their situation and that the mission had every reason to go and work in the Eighth Route Army, now that they had already done their stint in the Kuomintang areas. The office was going to wire a report about the matter to Mao Zedong and guaranteed them full co-operation. They were told that they could turn to the office for help whenever they were in need of it. Lastly, Dong Biwu reminded them that it was essential to obtain a Military Security Pass through the Minister of Health.

The initiative taken by the members of the Medical Mission frustrated the Kuomintang officials' policy of avoidance, and the officials were compelled to do something. That evening, the five received an invitation from Dai Jitao, President of the Examination Yuan, inviting them to have breakfast with him.

Among the people of the upper echelon in the Kuomintang, Dai had a considerable reputation as a politician, particularly as one who was also a scholar in Buddhism.

The talk started after breakfast. After dwelling at length upon Buddha's teachings, Dai Jitao proceeded to discuss politics and harped on the threadbare theory of the Kuomintang that communism could not be applied to China. The doctors became rather disappointed, because Dai did not show any interest in their enthusiasm to help in China's resistance efforts. Obviously, he was insinuating to the doctors that they should not have anything to do with the Chinese Communists.

At the suggestion of Professor Tan Yunshan of Cheena Bhavan, Tagore's University at Santi Niketan, West Bengal, that very afternoon the doctors decided unanimously to adopt Chinese names by adding the word "hua" (which means "China") to each of their names to indicate their determination to aid China. Thus Atal became Ai Dehua, Cholkar became Zhuo Kehua, Kotnis became Ke Dihua, Basu became Ba Suhua and Mukerji became Mu Kehua. Later, two of the five Indian friends were to die on Chinese soil. They were Kotnis and Atal who died of illness in Beijing on a friendly visit in 1957. The upright old man left just a few last words, bidding that half of his ashes be scattered around the ferry near Tongguan situated along the bank of the Huanghe River. The river is a symbol of the Chinese nation and Tongguan was a place he had passed on his way to Yan'an. The other half of his ashes were to be scattered on the soil of his motherland. The other three members of the mission have been emissaries of friendship between the Chinese and Indian peoples.

Although the five members had made up their minds and in fact had taken decisive action, the Kuomintang government simply refused to grant their request. They tried the Red Cross and the Minister of Transport and Communications. But all to no avail. What they got in return was either evasion or polite refusal.

It was not because they thought particularly highly of the five that the Kuomintang authorities were determined to retain them in the areas under their rule. Their biggest headache was world opinion. If all the foreign friends who came to aid China behaved in the same way, breaking away from the national government to go over to the

Chinese Communist Party, wouldn't that put the Kuomintang in a bad light?

On December 29, 1938, H. H. Kung, President of the Executive Yuan, received Cholkar, Basu, Kotnis and Mukerji in his office. Dr. Atal had flown to Hongkong for medical treatment.

H. H. Kung, seated in a corner, said to the four members of the mission, "According to the report submitted to me, you all want to go to Yan'an. Is that right?"

"Why do you want to go there? You'll find nothing except barren hills and waste land. So what's the point? I agree that it's too foggy here in Chongqing, but compared with Yan'an, Chongqing is much better militarily, politically and economically, with its fascinating scenery, strategic terrain and abundant products. What do you say?"

Cholkar rose slightly and answered courteously, "We say that each and every city of your country is beautiful. . . ."

"Oh! No, no, no!" Kung interrupted. "I'm the sort of person who likes to have candid conversations with friends. Don't be reluctant to tell me which cities you like and which you don't. Have you been to Wentan Canyon? Did you take a bath in the Cleansing Pool? Oh, so you've been there and taken a bath. Very well. Try to see more and enjoy yourself while you can."

Generally speaking, Kotnis was not in the habit of interposing remarks during receptions by bigshots. But when Kung turned down their request in this round-about way, he couldn't help speaking out frankly. "We are acting on the wishes of the Indian National Congress and people when we ask to be sent to the front to do medical work there," he said. "We know that the troops and people are

the north are suffering badly and are in urgent need of doctors and medicine. That's why we hope your government will approve our plan as soon as possible."

Kung moved again. He distorted Kotnis' meaning. "You want to work in the army? That's fine. We'll make arrangements. There are troops stationed in the vicinity of Chongqing, and you can go there. . . ."

Cholkar, the deputy leader, immediately cut him short, "Mr. President, we intend to. . . ."

"I know. You intend to go to Yan'an, don't you? That should be O.K., as a matter of fact, now that the Kuomintang and the Communist Party are working together; the Eighth Route and New Fourth Armies are under the command of the national government. But I wonder why you insist on going to Yan'an. The weather is cold there and you'll be short of food. I'm afraid you won't be able to stand the climate, since you're from a subtropical zone."

"Thank you for your consideration, Mr. President," said Basu who hadn't uttered a word yet. "It's precisely because life is hard there that the troops are more in need of doctors and medicine and we're more worried about them and feel the need to go there."

"Since you insist on going to have a look, our government won't mind. You have the liberty to use my special plane. You can go and stay for a week and then return to work here. How do you like the idea?"

"I'm sorry." With his piercing eyes, Kotnis looked hard at Kung. He continued to speak with courtesy. "The Indian people wish us to go and work where it is most disaster-ridden."

"Young man," said Kung trying to retain his unhurried tone which had obviously risen. "War is not child's play. Japanese planes bomb Yan'an day in and day out. Who

will take care of your safety? If something untoward happens to you, how are we going to account for it to the people of your country?"

"The Indian people have sent us here to assist the Chinese people in their War of Resistance Against Japan," said Kotnis, smiling. "In war, no one can tell whether he will survive or not. This our people will understand."

Basu looked at Kotnis appreciatively and then shifted his attention back to Kung. He waited quietly for the response. Kung was at a loss what to say. Finally, when he could think of no other excuse to turn them down, he stood up and flicked his sleeve. He curtly reproved Professor Tan who was serving as both companion and interpreter to the members, and then left the room in a huff.

And so ended the farce. The dignified President of the Executive Yuan, a leading member of the government, had forgotten basic diplomatic protocol.

Having failed to evade them, talk them round or get the better of them, the Kuomintang officials lost patience. They resorted to their last device. The Ministry of Health formally informed the mission that, if they insisted on going to Yan'an, India would have to pay for all their expenses and, besides, as fuel was in short supply there would be no petrol for the ambulance they had brought from India.

Without petrol, it would be impossible to get the 63 cases of medicine and surgical appliances and the ambulance to Yan'an. In order to get petrol, the mission negotiated with the Kuomintang authorities for eighteen days, but in vain. After his return from Hongkong on January 29, Atal personally went to talk with the authorities, and the answer he got was blunt. "Not available!" This made his blood boil. He decided to enlist world

opinion and immediately drafted a message to the Indian Aid-China Committee applying for prompt direct supply of fuel. They were all well aware that the censors at the post office would hold back such a message for fear of losing face before the world. On their way to the post office, the leader deliberately led his members on a detour through the residential area of the diplomatic corps, while making their complaint known to the foreign diplomats. This method worked wonders, for at dawn the next day the Ministry of Health sent them an official letter stating that the needed fuel would be supplied immediately. At the same time, they were given their military security pass.

They had succeeded. And the Kuomintang government's four-pronged policy of avoidance, persuasion, blandishment and coercion had ended in failure. But would the Kuomintang play new tricks when the mission was on its journey northwards, a journey extending over a thousand li? For the safety of the mission, the Office of the Eighth Route Army asked Rewi Alley, a friend from New Zealand who had worked in China for a number of years and was leaving for Yulin on an inspection tour of Chinese industrial co-operatives, to escort the medical mission to Yan'an.

Finally, on January 22, 1939, the Indian Aid-China Medical Mission set out on its northward journey.

6

On the eve of their departure from Chongqing, Kotnis had received a letter from home which carried the grievous news of the death of his father, Shantaram Kotnis.

Holding in his hand the letter stained with his tears,

Kotnis could hardly restrain his sorrow. He had loved his father dearly, not just because he owed everything to him, but more important, because during the twenty-eight years his father had taught him to become a man of integrity, a man who loves his motherland and people.

All his memories of his father were connected with Sholapur. Their lots had been interwoven.

When Kotnis was old enough to understand the meaning of the term "aggression", anti-colonialist sentiment was on an upsurge throughout the country. Sholapur was about to become a full-fledged industrial city. The non-cooperation movement started by Mahata Gandhi was in full swing. Being a middle-school student, Kotnis often followed his father to town to attend meetings encouraging the purchase of home-spun yarn and boycotting foreign fabrics. Once, a bonfire had been arranged for the burning of British-made fabrics at a place quite far from town. Immediately after work, his father had brought the children along on empty stomachs. It was the first time Kotnis had ever seen people of different races and religions gathering together in the darkness of night and bringing with them bales of British-made fabrics which they propped up on tree branches to form a great pile over which they poured fuel. An old man ceremoniously took over a torch from a young man and touched it to the pile. Instantly, with a roar, the pile leaped into flame and the jubilant people started to dance and sing around the fire. By the light of the flames, Kotnis noticed tears glistening in his father's eyes.

One summer, his father brought him and his brother to Vengurla, where his grandmother lived, to attend school there. The city was situated along the western coast within 200 miles of Bombay. By this time, the movement

to encourage the purchase of home-spun yarn and boycott British-made fabrics had reached this outlying city. There was a home-made spinning wheel in his grandmother's house, at the sight of which his father was delighted. Forgetting his fatigue from the journey, he began to teach Kotnis and his brother how to operate the wheel, and they got on very quickly. When he was to return to Sholapur, he placed the brothers in front of the wheel and bade them never to stop working at it. The brothers bore his words in mind and worked at the wheel for two or three hours whenever they had time.

The flame of resistance, once started, burned ever more vigorously. In the early 1930s, when the economic crisis in the capitalist world had spread to the Indian subcontinent, the Indian people's struggle against colonialism and for national independence was gaining momentum.

In May 1930, the Workers' Volunteers in Sholapur set fire to an arsenal, six police stations and most of the British administrative offices and bars. The insurrectionists opened fire on the British invaders, proclaimed the establishment of their own organs of power and declared that they would not execute any of the laws and decrees of the colonialist authorities. Several days later, a piece of distressing news came that the insurrection had ended in defeat for want of support and that the leaders had been handed over to a court-martial and been sentenced to be hanged.

The week-long workers' insurrection had been crushed following a furious street fight. However, nobody could succeed in stamping out the flames of struggle which swept the country and led to widespread strikes by workers and students in the big cities. In August 1932, Dr. Jivraj Metha, the dean of the Gowardhandas Sunderdas

Medical College of Bombay which Kotnis was attending, a man who supported the Civil Disobedience Movement, was arrested. The colonialist authorities sent a new dean to the college. The students of the college went on strike and stage demonstrations in protest. Kotnis spoke out boldly at public meetings against the new dean and the authorities.

The strike soon ended. Before the conclusion of the academic year, the new dean summoned Kotnis to his office, asking him to apologize for what he had said and pledge to transfer to another college after the examinations.

Kotnis blinked and darted a look of contempt at the dean. He proudly signed his name on the note to quit the college, turned round and left.

He had felt no qualms until he reached home. In order to support him, his father and all the other members of the family had undergone innumerable hardships. And here he was, expelled from college. Would his father give him a dressing down?

After hearing the whole story, his father didn't scold him. Instead, a smile beamed across the stern countenance. His father said, "Never mind. If they don't want you there, you can go to another college."

With great difficulty Kotnis' father managed to help him to get a transfer to the Grant Medical College, also in Bombay, in December 1932.

Kotnis had always received his father's firm support in all his undertakings. On the eve of his departure for China, the two had talked through the night. His father gently stroked a silver tumbler, a souvenir just given Kotnis by his mother, saying, "I only hope you won't let me and your mother down. Do your best there. Give your

whole heart to your work. The Chinese are our brothers and are leading as miserable lives as we. I wish you every success!"

What a noble father! He had expressed the wishes cherished by the entire Indian people!

His love and his hate together gave Kotnis the strength to bear the heavy burden of sorrow and anger. He wiped away his tears and joined his comrades again. He and Basu didn't get a wink of sleep all night, making preparations for their departure the next day and arranging and checking the medicines and instruments they were to bring with them. He remained quiet all the time, transforming his sorrow into intense work.

When all the other members learned about the sad news, they suggested that he go back to India to see how things stood with the family. He refused. He said, "My father gave me his full support when I came to China. I must do all I can for the Chinese people before going back to India."

That night, he wrote a long letter to his brother and sisters. He said, "It was not very difficult for me to bear the sad news." When the Chinese people were being trampled underfoot by the Japanese imperialists, he couldn't stand aloof. He went on to explain to them, "Only yesterday this city was bombed for the first time, killing outright over 50 persons. I saw bodies of men, women and innocent babies being pulled out of the debris. What was their fault that they should meet that tragic death? Where then was HE who 'tempers the cold wind for the lamb that is shorn'? What did HE do to protect the Glorious One Who offered his only blanket to the needy, himself shivering to death?" The Lord couldn't save mankind from misery and hardship; it had to be done

by the people themselves, and he was a member of the people. "I cannot go back before at least one year is completed, which is included in the contract I've signed with the National Congress," he reiterated. "Please do your best to console dear Ai (Kotnis' mother) whose lot is the saddest."

After sending out the letter he never again mentioned the matter. Basu said that he saw Kotnis' eyes brightening up on the day when they left Chongqing.

Chapter II

“I Should Become an Envoy of the People’s Revolution”

I

An ambulance of the latest type manufactured by the Ford Company in 1938 left Xi'an, the last city they stayed in that was under Kuomintang rule, and sped towards the north. Printed in English under the windows with the red cross signs, on both sides of the deep blue car, were the words, “Indian National Congress Ambulance”, eye-catching against the white snow. Needless to say, this was the ambulance brought by the Indian Medical Mission, and on board were the members of the mission.

However, it could no longer be called an ambulance. Before they left Chongqing, the authorities had already had the stretchers and medical instruments removed from the vehicle. When the bus arrived in Xi'an, the medical mission was again exposed to outrageous treatment by the Xi'an authorities. Jiang Dingwen, governor of Shaanxi Province, issued a special instruction: Both the mission members and their ambulance were to be detained. In

face of these unfriendly hosts, Dr. Atal, leader of the mission, and his party did obeisance to the various departments, but it was of no use. Finally, they were obliged to cast away their smiles and lodge repeated protests, but again it was to no avail. Thanks to the efforts of the resourceful Rewi Alley who took advantage of the complicated relations among the KMT upper echelon, the governor made an exception in this case, saying that the doctors could go to Yan'an while he himself would keep the ambulance. That is to say, as soon as the medical mission got to Yan'an, the ambulance was to return to Xi'an.

At 8:00 a.m. on February 11, after a delay of eight days in Xi'an, the medical mission set out for Yan'an. The road became increasingly difficult as they moved northward and, after Tongchuan, it wound into the mountains. Geographically, these mountains were not very high, but the numerous deep valleys made them seem high to the travellers. Following the zigzag road, the ambulance climbed up hills and down valleys. It was February, the season of much snow in North China. Crystal ice hanging down from rocks looked like pearl curtains; the snow on the road had hardened into a thick, icy layer with deep ruts where other vehicles had passed before, covered again by newly-fallen snow. Braving steep hilly roads and fierce snowstorms, the ambulance slid precariously along the brinks of precipices, risking the danger of rolling over and smashing to smithereens both ambulance and human beings. It was the first time for the five guests coming from a subtropical land to go into the mountains and to see snow. The experience was thrilling. Though wrapped up in a blanket, Dr. Atal could not help trembling from the cold all the time.

"You'll find nothing but mountains and snow. Coming from a subtropical area, you won't be able to stand it." This was what H. H. Kung had told them in Chongqing. The first sentence had proved to be true but not the second. After nearly twenty arduous days they arrived at last in the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region. For the last two days, they had been overwhelmed by the warmth of the people in the border region. Here the welcome was widespread and sincere. The Chinese people's friendship for the Indian people could only be fully expressed in the base area. Having experienced the hypocrisy and vulgarity of the welcome extended to them by the Kuomintang authorities, how could they fail to feel a warm glow in their hearts at the sincerity of their present welcome?

What moved them most was that, in the last two days, they met many fellow travellers. After Sanyuan, some 30 kilometres from Xi'an, they saw young people going to Yan'an in groups, some walking on foot, others taking a lift on whatever vehicles they met. In order to hurry to the General Headquarters of the anti-Japanese war, most of them had been rushing their progress for months on end. Watching the exhausted, limping young men and women, the Indian doctors became very excited. Again and again, they invited those most fatigued to climb onto their ambulance but, seeing that there wasn't much space, the young people politely declined. What fine young people! What powers of attraction Yan'an had! Atal could not help pouring out his thoughts and feelings: "This is a miracle! What large numbers of pilgrims this Chinese Jerusalem of the 20th century attracts!"

Finally, two days later, they arrived in Yan'an, their longed-for destination, and there met Mao Zedong.

On the third day after their arrival in Yan'an, a welcoming meeting was held by the General Health Department of the Eighth Route Army. No sooner had the applause of welcome died down than a new wave of warm applause began. The newly-appointed interpreter told them that Chairman Mao Zedong was coming!

Which one was Mao Zedong? Where was he? Kotnis craned his neck to look at the door. He tried in his usual way to distinguish the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party appearing at the door. To his disappointment, there wasn't any difference between these leaders and the people attending the meeting except that they were a bit older. They wore the same handwoven clothes. No one put on any of the airs typical of authorities. Once inside the room, people rushed forward to shake hands with and speak to them. And these leaders came forward with broad smiles to greet the people.

Kotnis, though tired from straining his neck and eyes, failed to make out Chairman Mao from the crowd. Not until the leaders were standing in front of them and after the introduction did he realize that this tall man with the broad forehead and kind smile was Mao Zedong. It was so unexpected that Kotnis suddenly became nervous. When Mao Zedong shook hands with him, he even failed to say "How do you do?" clearly.

After the welcoming speech, Mao Zedong and the others watched the cultural performances put on by students of the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College in Yan'an. Kotnis' seat was next to Mao Zedong's. This made him feel even more awkward and he fixed his eyes on the stage. During intervals between performances, he would turn his head in the hope of getting a closer look at Mao Zedong. But then he would immediately direct his eyes

back to the stage again as if afraid that the Chairman would discover his intentions. Noting his awkwardness, Chairman Mao smiled at him and, pointing to a fire pan in front of them, asked him to warm himself. Kotnis smiled gratefully, but did not reach out his hands.

The performances were created by the students of the college. One of the items was about the five men on the medical mission. The characters portraying them on the stage all wore big beards. As soon as the performance began, Mao Zedong humorously pointed to the actors on the stage and to Kotnis. He then stroked his own chin with a gentle smile, as if saying: Look! You've all grown big beards on the stage!

Seeing Mao Zedong so amiable and cheerfully communicative, Kotnis began to feel more at ease. He said, "The actors have probably seen Sikhs employed by the British in the concession areas. But none of us is from Punjab State, nor is there any Sikh among us. Therefore, we have no beards." After hearing the interpretation, Chairman Mao threw up his chin with a gentle laugh, and Kotnis' restraint gradually disappeared.

The medical mission spent a few days visiting army and government units, hospitals and schools and then they were assigned to their respective posts. Atal, Kotnis and Basu were assigned to the Model Hospital of the Eighth Route Army, specially built for them. Dr. Cholkar was assigned to the Medical School. At the end of May, he returned to India via Xi'an. Dr. Mukerji stayed to work in the health department. In the beginning of August, he returned to India for treatment of his kidney stones.

The Model Hospital of the Eighth Route Army was located in Guaimao, 17.5 kilometres away from Yan'an.

Kotnis was appointed a military surgeon and spent all his time in Yan'an at this post. The wards were all in caves that had been dug in the side of the hills. The three Indian doctors lived also in a set of three caves, Atal in the centre, and Basu and Kotnis each occupying the cave on each side. Before their cave-dwellings was a piece of level ground which was made into a small, tidy courtyard. Basu described their "new home" in his diary in such vivid terms:

In the summer days of Yan'an it does not rain but pours, washing the soft yellow earth of the loess hills down the gullies in muddy streams — flooding the valley. Green fields of millet, *kaoliang* on the terraced hill slopes and the multi-coloured vegetables were very soothing to the eye. What a contrast during the winter — barren yellow earth everywhere, even the few trees the region is proud of were devoid of leaves.

Though housed in caves and poorly equipped, the army hospital was generally regarded as the best hospital of Yan'an. Besides officers and armymen, civilians in the vicinity and even people beyond the border area of Yan'an came here for treatment. The patients included leading comrades of the Chinese Communist Party and peasants from remote hills. Dr. Kotnis made many friends in this hospital. From them he saw the style and spirit of the people of the base area and began to understand the people's leader, Mao Zedong.

He became acquainted with two girl fighters. Like boys, their hair was short and they wore army uniforms. They were as bold and vigorous as the other fighters in the Eighth Route Army, and yet they were merely two teenagers — one sixteen and the other seventeen. A year

earlier, they had come to Yan'an on foot from their respective home villages in Sichuan and Anhui. That was a journey of several thousand kilometres. Moreover, they had had to cross ring upon ring of blockade lines set up by the Kuomintang and the Japanese invading troops. Were they able to do this simply because they were particularly courageous? Not at all! When Kotnis asked them how they had had the courage to run such great risks, the girls replied with a smile, "Oh, we were afraid all right. We walked several months, and we were tired and frightened. But when we thought of our parents who'd been killed by the Kuomintang reactionaries and the prospect that we would be able to breathe freely when we reached Yan'an and found the Communist Party and Mao Zedong, hardships and exhaustion meant nothing to us."

Kotnis thought this somewhat romantic. Was it possible that fear and exhaustion would disappear when one thought of Yan'an and Mao Zedong? Did a political conviction have such great power?

Kotnis also came to know a peasant from the Beiping-Tianjin area. The two sons of this old man had been killed by the Japanese. After his younger son was killed, he served at the post where his son had fought and became an underground liaison man for the Communist Party. Not long afterwards, he was arrested. When the underground Party organization came to his rescue, he was on the verge of death. The comrades asked him whether he had anything to say, so he made a request. He wished to go to Yan'an to see Mao Zedong. His comrades fulfilled his request by finding a way to send him to Yan'an. After a period of treatment, Dr. Kotnis asked him, "Why did you only wish to see Mao Zedong at the last minute of

your life?" The old man's reply was very simple. "I'm a poor man. I wouldn't be able to close my eyes even after death, without first seeing our great leader."

Kotnis began to realize that the power of a political conviction is tremendous. The Chinese people who had groped in the dark for years at last saw the light in Mao Zedong. The name of Mao Zedong was linked together with independence, freedom and happiness.

As he had felt proud to make the acquaintance of Zhou Enlai, Dr. Kotnis considered himself fortunate to know Mao Zedong, who had met the five members of the mission on March 15. Moreover, Kotnis took particular pride in the opportunity to meet him alone and be entertained by him.

It was September 23. Atal sent Kotnis to the Ministry of Health to collect some information concerning the war situation and to press for a definite date for their departure for the front. At dusk, when he was about to leave the place a staff member informed him that upon learning that he had come to town, Chairman Mao had invited him to dinner.

It was a special honour to be a guest at Chairman Mao's home. Kotnis had no time to telephone his comrades in the hospital and inform them of the matter. He hurriedly followed the staff member to Yangjialing.

In front of Chairman Mao's cave, another staff member came forward to greet him and usher him in. At the sight of Dr. Kotnis, Chairman Mao, who had been writing at his desk, rose and firmly grasped his hands.

Inside the cave, there was no furniture besides a desk without drawers and a few wooden chairs. The unusual thing was that there were a lot of books. There were two bookshelves with books piled upon them. The cave

was furnished even more simply than had been reported.

Chairman Mao cordially asked Dr. Kotnis to sit down. He asked him whether he was used to life in Yan'an, what difficulties he had met in his work and what comment he had to make on the work of the hospital. The cordial and kind questions banished Kotnis' feelings of constraint. He not only answered the questions but also added, "We're mentally prepared for the difficulties in our life and work. In Chongqing, H. H. Kung mentioned these difficulties on purpose, to dissuade us from coming to Yan'an. Compared with Chongqing and India, life is indeed hard here, but we've already been well looked after. We're much better off than others."

Happy to hear this, Chairman Mao said that it was indeed necessary to be ready for prolonged suffering. Germany had recently occupied half of Poland. The war would drag on. But there was no doubt that the hardships would come to an end and fine days would follow. The anti-fascist struggle was sure to be victorious!

Their conversation ranged from Indian names to the life of Kotnis' family, from the fact that they added a "hua" as a suffix to each of their names to the friendship between the Chinese and Indian peoples. It was like a chat between close friends.

When a guard came in to announce that dinner was ready, Chairman Mao stood up and invited Dr. Kotnis to go into another cave.

The meal was very simple — three dishes, one soup, and a small plate of hot peppers. While helping Kotnis with the dishes, Chairman Mao asked him whether he liked hot peppers. When he answered in the affirmative, Chairman Mao smiled and said that this was another cultural tie, so to speak. Our ancestors had maintained

contact from time immemorial and this traditional bond of friendship should be continued. The Chinese and Indian peoples should join hands still more closely. So long as there was unity of the people and unity within the international community, imperialism would surely be smashed.

The dinner was finished with Chairman Mao keeping up a lively and humorous conversation. Back in the office, Kotnis mentioned to Chairman Mao the mission's wish to go to the front. This had already been approved and all preparations had been made. But owing to the enemy's intensified blockade against the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region and safety considerations, the health department had decided to postpone their time of departure indefinitely. Availing himself of the opportunity, Kotnis expressed the mission's hope to leave for the front as soon as possible.

On hearing this, Chairman Mao laughed heartily and expressed his consent. Kotnis was overjoyed. Standing up like an Eighth Route Armyman, he said, "Please give your instructions concerning our future work."

Putting out his cigarette, Chairman Mao said, after a pause, that they would meet again before the departure. For the moment, he only expected them to do three things — study hard, work well and do a good job of publicity. He wished them new successes in their work.

"I will not fail to live up to your expectations," replied Kotnis solemnly.

This conversation left an unforgettable impression on Kotnis, while his account of his family also left a deep impression on Mao Zedong. After Kotnis' death, Mao Zedong asked Dr. Basu to convey to Kotnis' family a personal letter, which reads in part:

In the most difficult days during our anti-Japanese war, when we were badly in need of medical personnel and equipment, your brother came to our country and has done a lot of humanitarian work for our people. I myself have witnessed that, with a sense of voluntary humanitarianism and internationalism, your brother, often overcoming many hardships and difficulties, saved many of our people from death and cured many who had been wounded.

In the anti-Japanese bases in the rear, I worked quite a long time with your brother. Therefore, I consider myself to have the right to regard your brother as my closest comrade-in-arms. Today, though your brother, who was so dear to my heart, is no longer with us, his devotion to duty and his great courage in overcoming hardships and difficulties will always remain in my mind. Your brother will live in the hearts of the revolutionary Chinese people forever.

2

On November 4, 1939, Kotnis set out for the front in southeast Shanxi together with Atal, Basu and a young anti-fascist German doctor Müller who had arrived in Yan'an not long before and had remained to work in the Eighth Route Army.

After only two days, something went wrong with their truck which was overloaded. Looking at his fellow travelers on the truck, Dr. Kotnis joked, "We'll have to pull the truck. We've got to pay the price as we've offended it."

Aside from these few foreigners, the other passengers

were all officers and men of the Eighth Route Army. They hastily jumped down from the truck. Kotnis picked up the rope to pull the truck and stood out front. Through their joint efforts, the shabby truck moved forward.

Although they were already out of the mountains, the road here was by no means flat. They had to go up and down many hills. Whenever they came to a steep slope they had to stoop very low, with their bodies almost touching the ground. Sometimes they had to crawl forward with the help of their hands. Every steep slope they climbed not only made their backs and legs ache, but also their chests due to the strain on their breathing. The snow underfoot was already frozen. When going downhill, if one person fell, several others would be pulled along down. Thus they stumbled along and covered little more than 30 kilometres in more than one day. When they reached Yaoxian County, they were already covered with sweat and mud, making them look like clowns.

That evening, the comrade who served both as interpreter and captain of the team succeeded in contacting the Office of the Eighth Route Army in Xi'an by telephone and it was agreed that a truck would be sent from Xi'an to meet them.

Kotnis fell ill through over-exhaustion. His fellow travellers visited him, some even bringing delicious edibles which their wives or friends had put in their bags before departure. Everybody expressed sympathy and regret. But Kotnis simply said, "It's nothing. I'm ready to meet even more severe tests!"

Three days later, they were on the road again.

In November, the plateau in the northwest was already a vast scene of freezing ice and snow. The snow weighed down branches, sealed mountain caves, filled valleys and



covered rivers. The white sky and earth formed a silvery landscape that was beautiful but full of danger. It was particularly difficult to climb the hills. The snow had covered both path and gullies. Before taking a step, it was imperative to probe the path with a branch. Otherwise, it was quite possible to slide into some deep gully. On the evening of the 28th, Basu wrote in his diary:

Another 17 li today. Had to cross a very high hill which made us a bit tired. In addition, the bitter north wind unbearable. The fingers, toes, nose and ears had become insensible. If you walk you have to climb hills which tire you very much. If you ride your hands and feet become painfully cold. What a dilemma!

What was even more difficult to cope with, however, was their situation apropos of the enemy. Although the escort troops tried in a thousand and one ways to get round the blockade lines imposed by the Japanese, encounters with the enemy were unavoidable. The closer they reached the front, the more frequent the encounters became. On December 15, when they were nearing Wuxiang, where the Headquarters of the Eighth Route Army was located, they became engaged in a two-day skirmish with the enemy who had tightly sealed the road leading to the headquarters. For two days and one night, they could not cross the blockade line. They did not find a new route until the night of the 16th. This new route was only two li away from an enemy-occupied village. After midnight, they set out together with the escort troops. For fear of being discovered, they had to advance as swiftly and quietly as possible. The further along the road they advanced, the closer they drew to the enemy. As soon

as they reached the outskirts of the village, a dog began to bark. The enemy hidden in the defence works was awakened and began firing machine-guns. Bullets whistled over their heads. They at once lay flat on the snowy ground. The regiment commander in charge of the escort analysed the enemy's firepower and ordered them to continue the advance. Getting up from the snow-covered ground, they rushed forward tensely with their heads bent. After about five li, just as they were going to straighten their aching backs, a line of shadows again loomed in front of them. They had unexpectedly run into the enemy again. This time the encounter was very arduous. It lasted until dawn when they at last shook off the enemy's pursuit and arrived at a regimental headquarters of the 129th Division. Here they were only 15 li away from the blockade line. The slope of the hill before which they camped was scarred by shell craters from which thick smoke still rolled upwards. The regiment commander told them with a smile that the enemy had been shelling them for a whole day and, more than once, the shells had fallen just beside their houses.

Far from flinching in face of the hardships of battle, Kotnis grew tougher. War widened his field of vision and enabled him to see a new world.

Kotnis and his party crossed the Huanghe River at Mianchi. On the north bank of the river, not a single village they passed was intact. However, the villagers had not left their homes but had got organized and armed themselves with big broadswords, spears or even sickles and spades to resist the enemy. They spent a night in a small village in Yangcheng County. The young people of this village had all gone to the front with the 129th Divi-

sion. Those left behind, the women and the aged, persisted in struggle. In fact, the village had become the front. Between August and December, the Japanese troops had already burned and ransacked it three times. Not a single room was left intact. The organized villagers had used straw to make some mortar and done some repair work. Several families took shelter under one roof. It was a situation which adults could tolerate, but not children. Deep in the night, the cold and hungry children, unable to hold up any longer, would often burst out crying in the arms of their parents. Even in such difficult times, not a sigh escaped anyone. Even in such a battered village, there was no sign of frustration or despair. On the second day of their arrival, all the villagers gathered for a meeting to welcome the medical mission. Presiding over the meeting was an old woman. When she made known to the public the identity of the medical mission, the villagers excitedly surrounded the members, offering them whatever was left after the enemy's raids. Some took out handfuls of big dates. Others brought dried persimmons — things they had saved even when their children were crying from hunger. Those who had nothing to offer apologized regretfully, saying, "We really have nothing left to offer you but a few heart-felt words. We thank our Indian friends for their help." For the sake of the cause of national liberation, these people had offered up kith and kin, house and home — in fact, everything. Now that they had nothing left, they felt ashamed of being unable to entertain these friends from afar. The leading comrade escorting the medical mission told them that the old woman presiding over the meeting had already lost her husband and three sons for the cause of resistance. Taking over their weapons, she herself was now at a post

of struggle. Kotnis wept when he left the village. He expressed to the old woman his readiness to share her sorrows. She thanked him, but held back her tears. Smoothing her white hair dishevelled by the wind, she said firmly, "In order to fight Japan, I'm ready to give up my own life and even the lives of my grandchildren, in addition to my husband and three sons!" For many days afterwards Dr. Kotnis continued to be deeply moved by these simple and sincere words.

At the foot of Mount Wangwu — the former home of the legendary Foolish Old Man who removed the mountains — Dr. Kotnis spent several days with a guerrilla leader younger than himself. This guerrilla leader was but a child when he joined the Red Army. As his family was poor, he had never been to school. After he joined the Red Army, the political instructor gave him a notebook to aid him in learning to read. His name on the cover of the notebook was written by the instructor. He learned to read his own name and then gradually acquired more and more knowledge. In the past, he had herded sheep for a landlord and had been beaten twice because he had lost some of the sheep. On his forehead was a crescent-shaped scar left from that time. When the landlord beat him, he did not cry, nor did he beg for pardon. He only repeated, "I can't count. I don't know how many head of sheep you have." When the landlord had had enough, he followed the beating with a ferocious scolding, "What an idiot you are! Like a block of wood!" This shepherd who had once been called a block of wood could now not only read books and newspapers but also speak Japanese. Not long before, disguised as an interpreter of Japanese, he and his fighters had gone into a town nearby, deceived the Japanese staff members and Chinese collabo-

rators at the railway station, and brought back over three hundred rifles and pistols stored at the station. As an able fighter, he became a legendary figure in that area. A year earlier, he had had only six followers. Now he had a regiment under his command.

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New skies, new earth, new people and new things — too many to enumerate and too beautiful to be all taken in. All the way, Kotnis kept a record of his thoughts and feelings in a small notebook and more than once told the interpreter accompanying them, “Though I haven’t been to an Anti-Japanese University, I can be said to have attended another one of a new type.” Patting his notebook, he said, “I’ve learned a lot!”

Like a treasure-hunter, Kotnis kept observing and studying the world around him with keen zest, but being a foreigner, he could not immediately appreciate everything he saw and heard. He had many questions to ask. For instance, he could not understand why armed struggle had played such an important role in the Chinese people’s prolonged fight for freedom and independence. “Can it be that the Chinese are good soldiers by nature?” he would often ask.

With this question in mind, he stepped with Drs. Atal and Basu into the Headquarters of the Eighth Route Army in Wuxiang County, Shanxi Province, on the morning of December 21, 1939. He found an answer to his question in Commander-in-Chief Zhu De’s cordial talk with them. The gist of the talk was something like this:

Like all other peoples, the Chinese are by nature freedom-loving. Our struggle has taken a tortuous path. It was the enemy’s slaughter and the people’s blood that awakened us and impelled us to go in for armed struggle.

We must thank Comrade Mao Zedong, under whose leadership the Chinese revolution has been able to develop rapidly and the people have come to understand the ultimate goal, prospect and way of revolution. Once the people grasp revolutionary theory, their wisdom and courage will be infinite. This is true of the people in all countries.

Zhu De could not conceal his joy whenever he talked about his people. His weather-worn face flushed with pleasure.

Naturally, as an internationalist, Zhu De were keenly interested in the struggle of the Indian people. He inquired about the conditions in India and spoke highly of the Indian doctors' determination to come all the way to North China to help the Chinese army and people to fight Japanese imperialism.

Then the subject of the conversation changed. Zhu De asked the Indian doctors if they had heard about the Canadian doctor Norman Bethune. They all replied that they did. On their way, they had read reports and knew that he had died at the front a short time ago.

During the Chinese people's War of Resistance, a number of doctors from various countries volunteered to come to China and offered their services. Norman Bethune was the most popular among the people in the liberated areas. A distinguished surgeon, he went to Spain and worked at the front in 1936 when the German and Italian fascists invaded that country. In the spring of 1938, he came to China at the head of a medical team. Imbued with ardent internationalism and the communist spirit, he served in the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei border region for nearly two years. He contracted blood poisoning while operating on

wounded soldiers and died in a small village in Tangxian County, Hebei.

Speaking of Bethune, the Commander-in-Chief was filled with profound emotion. He mentioned Bethune's utter devotion to work and his warm-heartedness towards the people. All those who returned from the front were unanimous in express admiration for the Canadian doctor. As the Headquarters of the Eighth Route Army was going to hold a memorial meeting in his honour on the 24th, Zhu De invited the Indian doctors to attend.

Atal, Kotnis and Basu sincerely accepted the invitation. They were affected by the mood of the Commander-in-Chief, and an air of solemnity hung heavily over them.

As he had to attend an important military meeting, Commander-in-Chief Zhu regretfully took his leave of them and departed in a hurry. Satisfied with their conversation with him, the three of them left this ordinary peasant hut. On the way back to their dormitory, they remained silent. Zhu De's words had stirred them to the depths of their souls; silent thought alone could calm their agitation.

The next day, the Headquarters of the Eighth Route Army arranged for them to take a rest. They used this rare opportunity to hold a serious discussion and then submitted a formal application. They wanted to study the experience of the Chinese people's national liberation movement.

The headquarters approved their application and made specific arrangements. Dr. Basu wrote in his diary:

We had been informed that an eight-month programme had been drawn up for us. In the first two months' stay here, they would give us the opportunity to

learn more about the various political activities carried out by the Eighth Route Army. Afterwards, we would be sent to different anti-Japanese bases for rendering medical services. At the same time we would have the chance to learn the fighting tactics and organizational methods of this army. We think that the present international situation was in favour of our people in India to liberate themselves from British domination. And to know something from the people who are actively fighting for liberation was a rare opportunity for us the Indians.

Two days later, on the morning of the 24th, they attended the meeting in commemoration of Dr. Bethune held at the Headquarters of the Eighth Route Army. At the meeting, Commander-in-Chief Zhu De highly praised Comrade Bethune's internationalist spirit and excellent medical skills and called upon everyone to learn from his utter devotion to his work. When Dr. Kotnis stood in silent tribute before the portrait of Dr. Bethune, he vowed to himself that he would follow Bethune's example.

3

Life at the front was even harder than in Yan'an. Dr. Atal's eczema became serious again. The itch and pain tortured him. On February 3, Atal left for India. Of the original five members of the Indian Medical Mission only Dr. Kotnis and Dr. Basu were still in China. At first they felt a bit lonely. But a strong sense of responsibility soon replaced this feeling of loneliness.

In accordance with their eight-month programme of study, the two joined units of the 129th Division, doing medical work while getting acquainted with the guerrilla tactics of the Eighth Route Army.

Being doctors, they were more familiar with experiences in the medical field which they found easier to understand than the fighting tactics and organizational methods of the Eighth Route Army. The medical service structure in Yan'an was quite different from that in Chongqing and the situation at the front was again different from that in Yan'an. Yan'an was in the great rear area of the anti-Japanese war. In spite of the enemy's frequent bombing and its attempts to encroach upon the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region, heroic Yan'an stood lofty and firm as a rock. Throughout the eight years of the anti-Japanese war, the enemy could never succeed in their schemes to occupy the Shaanxi-Gansu-Ningxia Border Region. Therefore, all kinds of medical and health activities could be carried out in Yan'an and personnel and equipment were relatively sufficient. The situation at the front, however, was different. At the beginning of 1940, though the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Border Region was expanding and being consolidated, it was still divided and surrounded by the enemy. We existed amidst the enemy and the enemy existed amidst us. Such a military situation necessitated the adaptation of medical and health work to it. So, the medical personnel of the Eighth Route Army working at the front created a new form of medical service. Dr. Kotnis drew an analogy. "They are like a forest growing from the crevices of rocks," he said. In an article specially dealing with health work at the front, Dr. Basu wrote down their initial impressions:

When you enter an ordinary village, you may come across a few young men and women in uniforms and aprons with red cross signs dyed on them going from house to house along the clean streets. They are nurses or other medical personnel of the Eighth Route Army. Sometimes you may see the recuperating sick and wounded in twos and threes bathing in the sunshine by the road-side, reading books and newspapers about the anti-Japanese war or chatting with the villagers. You may also see five or six of them in a squad, lying on old wooden beds or on the heatable brick beds of the local people, waiting for doctors and nurses to give them a check up or apply medication. Such are the Eighth Route Army's hospitals at the battle front. Many villagers have offered the use of their homes as wards for hospitalizing hundreds of sick people, as bedrooms for the doctors and nurses, as operating rooms, or as rooms for changing bandages and preparing prescriptions. The surroundings of these hospitals are kept very clean. Apart from their own work, the medical personnel of the Eighth Route Army help the villagers do the cleaning and give them lessons in health education. They mingle with the villagers. But for their uniforms, it would be impossible to tell the medical personnel and the sick and wounded from the villagers. This is what the frontline hospitals of the Eighth Route Army are like. On the plains and in areas close to the enemy, the wounded and medical personnel all wear ordinary clothes and live scattered among the local inhabitants. The villages are large, making it difficult for the enemy scouts and Chinese collaborators to discover them. They maintain constant contact with the army, from whom they receive information about enemy movements and

orders to transfer. Besides, the villagers give them a lot of help in many respects. For instance, when the enemy approaches the village, the women and children are ready to claim that the wounded and the medical personnel are their husbands, fathers, brothers or other relatives, offering the explanation that they have been wounded by stray bullets while working in the fields, and thus avoiding the enemy's suspicion. Such medical groups are found all over the Hebei-Shandong plains.

They admired the newly-created forms of medical organization. They appreciated even more the creators of this new form. How numerous were the medical personnel whose deeds moved one to songs of praise and to tears! Once, during a battle, the captain of a medical unit received a report that a leading comrade directing the left flank had been wounded. Grabbing his Red Cross kit, the captain set out at once. The wounded comrade lay beside the enemy's barbed-wire fence. A stream of bullets from the enemy pillbox sealed off the road. The captain boldly and swiftly dashed into the range of enemy fire. Unfortunately, the enemy discovered him and directed all its firepower towards him. In no time he lay prostrate on the wounded. Fifty minutes later, when he returned to the bandaging station, his face was already covered with clotted blood. When the captain saw Kotnis and Basu he said, with great difficulty, "I have fulfilled my task after all. Not a single wounded soldier is left on the field." With these words, he closed his eyes forever.

In every unit they met such medical personnel. The heroic deeds of these Eighth Route Army medical personnel moved them deeply. At an informal discussion, Dr. Kotnis spoke excitedly, with tears in his eyes. "When I

was in college," he said, "I was once moved to the point of almost losing my self-control by the deeds of Father Damien. In order to save those suffering from leprosy this Belgian Catholic missionary courageously went to Molokai Island to give them treatment in isolation. You are like Damien, who was acclaimed in the medical circles for his noble qualities. It is your lives and your blood that you are devoting to this new humanitarian cause with its new meaning!"

Dr. Basu had his own understanding. He saw the profound political reason behind such heroic deeds. In the same article mentioned above, he wrote:

One of the best points of the Eighth Route Army's medical work lies in the relationship between the doctors and the sick and wounded. They show respect and loving care for each other. Doctors give medical treatment and comfort to the patients with the warmth and attention of kith and kin. The Eighth Route Army soldiers are worthy of being called national heroes. They all display a dauntless spirit in defying personal danger both in fighting and in face of all difficulties, so they deserve such love and warm respect. In this vast army not a single sick or wounded soldier is ever neglected or forsaken. Every comrade devoted to the cause of national revolution, whether he is an officer or an ordinary soldier, is highly treasured. I do not wish to talk about how coldly the wounded soldiers are treated in many capitalist countries or in many other parts of China where we have been. The intolerable situation in the 17th Route Army stationed in northern Henan and southern Shanxi as well as among other Chinese troops constitutes but one familiar example. When we arrived

at the front, we got off the train at Mianchi, Henan Province, a station on the Longhai Railway. From there a newly built highway of over 100 kilometres long led directly to the bank of the Huanghe River. Opposite the river was the town of Yanchi in Shanxi Province. It was the end of 1939, the season of snowstorm. In the cutting wind and through the mud trudged large numbers of wounded soldiers in groups or single file, straggling all the way from the battle front in Shanxi Province to its rear area. They were miserableness itself, suffering from anaemia and malnutrition and worn down to skin and bones. Their bodies were barely covered by tattered unlined clothes and their feet were bare or wrapped in rags. Pausing for a rest after every few steps, they stumbled along in the hope of reaching the rear area. Their superiors were so callous that they not only refused to find means to transport them to the rear but went so far as to pocket the fund set aside for their food and travel expenses. So, here they were, landed in a plight beyond description, begging during the day and sleeping in the open air at night. As we proceeded, we saw the corpses of many who had died of hunger and cold lying by the side of the road. After giving out all his pocket money, the young German doctor travelling with us said in despair, "They are like Napoleon's army in retreat from Moscow," for they were innumerable. By inquiring, we learned that they had been impressed into the 17th Route Army and were now on their way home, being dismissed because of their disabilities. Their cotton-padded clothes had been taken away from them by their superiors and they had been given just one or two yuan each which was supposed to last over ten days until they reached home.

It meant that they had to struggle all along the high paths. Such was the attitude of the mercenary high-ranking officers towards the life of those dedicated to the cause of national liberation! Poor soldiers! They were under the most tragic oppression until their death.

We have never seen anything of the sort in the Eighth Route Army, where it is simply inconceivable. Here, when one has food and clothing, it means that the whole army has. The sick and wounded receive preferential treatment — better food and clothing. And it is common practice for the medical personnel to share their thin bedding with the patients.

He went on to relate:

The sick and wounded of the Eighth Route Army display the spirit of readiness to endure hardships for the revolution. They are always found smiling in spite of their dangerous wounds and diseases. They are fully aware of the cause of their injuries and wait patiently to recuperate, keeping in mind that they still have to settle accounts with the Japanese aggressors. When having their bandages changed or wounds washed, they curse the Japs between their teeth, so as to relieve their pain. In the Hundred Regiments Campaign,⁴ the enemy used dum-dum bullets in total disregard of international law. There is no healing a wound inflicted by a dum-dum bullet. Yet, these soldiers behave as if they

⁴ The Hundred Regiments Campaign: In the autumn of 1941, the Eighth Route Army deployed 115 regiments to attack the Japanese troops stationed along key communication lines in North China and their strongholds on both sides. The campaign lasted three and half months, and the strongholds of the Japanese and puppet troops were captured and 46,000 of their men annihilated.

have not been wounded at all. They do not know that they will be disabled for life. When they are carried into the simple operating rooms, they plead to have their wounds healed quickly so that they can return to the battlefields to kill the Japs. We deeply admire this spirit of the Eighth Route Army soldiers. Therefore, we take meticulous care in giving them treatment.

In short, we believe that the Eighth Route Army has not only demonstrated to the oppressed nations of the world that, in spite of backward technology, a people's army firmly resisting foreign aggression can defeat the enemy by its high level of political consciousness and its courageous fighting spirit and, what's more, it can set a fine example for others in medical work. . . .

The heroic deeds of the medical personnel and wounded soldiers of the Eighth Route Army inspired the Indian doctors. Whenever they had to serve the wounded like the medical personnel of the Eighth Route Army, they didn't hesitate to do so.

Early in 1940, taking advantage of the opportunity provided by the actively anti-Communist Kuomintang when they launched a large-scale offensive against the Eighth Route Army on the northern front in Shanxi, the Japanese aggressors amassed a large number of troops along the southern front to attack our base area in southeast Shanxi. They hoped to drive away our 129th Division. In order to safeguard this anti-Japanese base area, a fierce battle began in the hilly area near Changzhi, the prefectural seat in southeast Shanxi.

A temporary operating station was set up close to where the fighting was going on. This was Dr. Kotnis' suggestion and Dr. Bethune's practice. At the headquarters,

Commander-in-Chief Zhu often talked about Bethune's deeds at the front. The main idea was that the closer the medical team was to the front, the more effectively they could rescue and treat the wounded. The leadership of the army approved Dr. Kotnis' suggestion and instructed the guards to be doubly alert to the safety and requirements of the Indian Medical Mission.

It was not long before the operating station was extremely busy with its work. The battle was fierce and many soldiers were wounded. By noon the following day, there were still many wounded soldiers needing to be operated on. Dr. Kotnis' eyes began to hurt and his throat was dry. Just as he took a canteen hanging from a tree and gulped down a few mouthfuls of water, during a break between operations, he noticed two soldiers supporting someone with a bleeding face coming towards him. The wounded person kept struggling and shouting. "What orders from the regiment commander? I don't believe it! Let me go!" Paying no attention, the two soldiers continued to help him forward. Oh, what a familiar voice! Dr. Kotnis stepped forward to have a closer look and found it was no other than the platoon leader who had been in charge of their safety. He had gone to the front only shortly before the battle began, and had left behind the canteen Dr. Kotnis was holding. Now the left eye of this platoon leader was bandaged with a piece of cloth torn from his army uniform and blood was streaming down his face. He had been wounded. Dr. Kotnis was startled and rushed forward.

The two soldiers were relieved to see him. "Doctor, please bandage him quickly. He's been shot blind," they said hastily.

"What? Shot blind?" There was no time to express



his sorrow. Paying no attention to the shouts of the platoon leader, Dr. Kotnis joined the other two in helping him into the operating room.

The platoon leader had been wounded in the left eye. Blindness in that eye was now only too certain. According to the two soldiers who had brought him back, he had already been wounded for several hours. Early in the morning, the enemy, relying on its superior force, had launched a counter-attack against our position and our forces were placed under great pressure. The regiment commander had ordered the platoon leader to take some comrades and close in on the enemy from its flank. Without a word, the platoon leader had obeyed. As soon as they attacked, the panic-stricken enemy turned round to attack them. At that moment, the platoon leader's left eye was wounded by a fragment of an enemy shell. Without uttering a word, he bandaged it with a piece of cloth torn from his uniform and continued to direct the whole platoon. At first, thinking that he had only got a scratch, nobody paid any attention. Later, a squad leader found that he was pale in the face and realized, then, that he had been seriously wounded. The squad leader offered to direct the battle for him and told the two soldiers to bring the platoon leader to the operating station. The platoon leader flew into a rage and reprimanded the squad leader, "I'm not dead yet. There's no need for you to replace me!" When the enemy was finally repulsed, he crumpled silently to the ground. The two soldiers immediately carried him away. But, half way back, he came to and burst out shouting. He insisted on returning to the battle.

What a staunchman! Dr. Kotnis immediately cleaned

his wound and personally placed him on a stretcher to be sent to the rear area.

The battle continued to rage fiercely. Group after group of wounded soldiers waited for him to give them first-aid treatment and to bandage them. Preoccupied with his work, he no longer felt sore and dry in the eyes and throat. From time to time he cast a glance at the canteen hanging on the tree, but he never touched it.

.....

Dr. Kotnis worked tenaciously despite the hail of bullets and his exhaustion and hunger. He worked for hours on end. When the time came for close combat, in consideration of his safety, comrades tried to persuade him to retreat together with the wounded soldiers. Thinking that they were belittling him, he lost his temper and shouted angrily, "Why are you telling me to retreat? If I can live and die together with you, I'm not qualified to work in the Eighth Route Army!"

Eventually, the wounded soldiers were all evacuated. From a list of casualties at the operating station, Kotnis discovered that, in this battle alone, more than 20 comrades had laid down their lives, and over 70 had been wounded. An expression of sorrow came to his face. But when he saw the large numbers of Japanese corpses lying on the ground and the long lines of prisoners-of-war walking peacefully under escort, his sorrowful look gave way to an expression of fortitude and glowing confidence.

4

After three months in southeastern Shanxi, Kotnis and Basu had acquired an elementary knowledge of English.

Route Army fighting experience in mountainous areas. But, how did the Eighth Route Army open and establish anti-Japanese base areas on plains where the enemy could bring its superiority into play?

One day, when a deputy commander working in a plain area came to attend a meeting at the headquarters, the two made a point of asking him about this. He replied with humour, "Oh, we have mountains in our area! We are creators of mountains. How can there be no mountains?" Seeing that they were puzzled, the deputy commander explained. "Once the people are organized, they will become mountains and dense forests. Only such mountains have strength! When we hide in such mountains, no matter how ferocious and cunning the modern enemy is, he will be rendered utterly helpless."

Human mountains! An interesting analogy! With regard to mountains, Kotnis now no longer found them strange. At first, he had been afraid of them, afraid of the rough roads where a pair of shoes would be worn out in a few days, and afraid of the thistles and thorns which threatened to tear his clothes and skin at every step. He had been afraid of the countless deep valleys, a mere glance at which made one dizzy. After nearly one year in the mountains with his comrades, he had grown to love these mountains. He loved them for their breadth and their dense forests where our guerrilla fighters could hide. He loved them for their complex terrain which afforded the Eighth Route Army favourable conditions to defeat the enemy through surprise attacks. He even came to love the countless narrow paths, thistles and thorns and deep valleys because they meant unconquerable pitfalls and barriers to the enemy. On the plains, however, there were neither dense forests, deep valleys, thistles nor thorns. The

enemy could make full use of its modern equipment. How could the Eighth Route Army wipe out the enemy skilfully as they did in the mountains and forests?

"What is a human mountain like?" Kotnis could help asking Basu.

After a few minutes' deep thought, Basu replied, "think it refers to the awakened people."

The "human mountain" was a new concept. It was possible to imagine it. It would be better to go and have a look with their own eyes. In order to study guerrilla warfare on the plains, the two doctors raised a new request. They asked to be sent to the plains. The headquarters approved their request. In early April, they said good-bye to the comrades of the 129th Division with whom they were familiar and set out for the plains of Hebei Province.

After a march of more than ten days, they came to their first village on the plains. At the sight of the plains, Kotnis' heart suddenly felt lighter. He unconsciously quickened his steps and ran to the front of their troop. At the entrance of the village, he was startled by a rattasseled spear thrust towards his chest. He stood still.

"Who are you?" a barefoot boy inquired in a severe tone.

The interpreter stepped forward hastily to explain. "This is a comrade on the Indian Medical Mission. They come to help us fight the Japanese."

"Fight the Japanese!" These words seemed to wonder the little boy. He held back the spear and stretched out his hand, saying, "Show me."

"What?"

"The travel permit."

"Oh, yes, yes!" The interpreter hastened to produce

The little boy examined it carefully for some time. It seemed he couldn't read it, for he gave a whistle and a middle-aged man working in the distance hurried towards them. To avoid any misunderstanding, the interpreter took this opportunity to explain to the two doctors that in order to prevent spies from worming their way into our base areas for purposes of espionage and disruption, the Children's Corps had established sentry posts at all road crossings and everyone had to obey them.

At that moment, the middle-aged man came over. After reading the travel permit, he warmly reached out his hands and introduced himself. "I'm the chairman of the peasants' association," he said. "Sorry to have kept you waiting. The little chap can't read very well." Then he told the boy seriously, "They are Eighth Route Army men. Let them pass."

The little boy nodded consent.

They were about to move when the boy suddenly shouted, pointing to a flagstone by the road on which were written four Chinese characters. Kotnis recognized the first two characters — "Resist Japan". Why were these two words written here? Was it for propaganda? Before he realized what it was all about, the chairman of the peasants' association smiled. And so did the interpreter who explained to them that in the border area a campaign had been launched recently to eliminate illiteracy. At the entrance of every village, there was a literacy signpost. Everyday four new words were written on it. Passersby had to be able to read these words before they were allowed to pass. After the explanation, the chairman earnestly read the words on the flagstone and then said to the little boy, "Now let us go."

But the little boy would not promise. Pointing to Dr. Kotnis and the others, he said, "What about them?"

The interpreter stepped forward and read these words. Pointing to Kotnis and Basu, the boy said, "They haven't read the words yet."

The chairman was a man of patience. "They are Indian comrades," he explained to the boy. "They can't speak Chinese yet. So they should be excused."

The little boy was rather stubborn. He hadn't studied geography and didn't understand what India meant. He asked, "What is India?"

"India . . . that's a foreign country," the chairman replied. "I mean, it's the Western Paradise where the master monk Xuanzang went on a pilgrimage to get the Buddhist scriptures many centuries ago."

The boy was astonished. "That far?"

"Right, right!" The chairman was happy with his own explanation which was accepted by the boy. So he said proudly, "Now, they should be excused!"

"Well . . ." the boy hesitated. This India, or Western Paradise, had taken him in. He wasn't sure what to do.

Dr. Kotnis was amused by this question and answered in the session. He admired the boy for his devotion to his job and his attitude of scrupulosity to every detail. Unwilling to hurt the boy's sense of responsibility, Kotnis stepped forward with Basu and said in stiff Chinese, "We also learn."

On hearing this, the hesitating boy was astonished again. So, the comrades from the Western Paradise could speak Chinese after all! He gazed at the chairman without knowing what to do. There being no alternative, the chairman nodded and said, "You teach them."

At once the boy put on a serious expression. Placing one

hand on his hip in an unnatural way, obviously imitating the adults, he pointed at the stone with the other hand and read out in a childish voice, "Resist Japan. Eliminate traitors."

The next morning, Dr. Kotnis got up to do his military exercises as usual. In order to get used to life at the front, Kotnis learned to climb mountains when he was in Yan'an. Here on the plains there were naturally no mountains to climb. He then returned to his military exercises which he had given up for more than a year. After doing the exercises twice, he walked around the yard, kicking his legs and stretching his chest. In front of the west chamber of their living quarters, Dr. Kotnis saw a set of blacksmith's tools. These things were familiar to him. In Sholapur, he had often been attracted by the clanging and banging of smithies. What was more astonishing to him was that these tools were exactly the same as those used in India. Was that another one of those cultural ties mentioned by Mao Zedong? Out of curiosity and a feeling of nostalgia, Kotnis picked up the hammer and struck twice on the anvil. An old man appeared. Without a word, he took the big hammer away from Kotnis, put it in a corner and walked off without turning back his head.

As it turned out, although Dr. Kotnis and the others were staying with the peasants' association, the house of the association had been borrowed temporarily from this old man. The blacksmith's tools belonged to his family. How could Kotnis have known that? He felt extremely embarrassed. Wasn't that old man a bit too surly? It was the first time he had ever seen an old man of such a temperament in the base areas!

Kotnis and Basu had come to this place to take part in a massive struggle to destroy the railway. They stayed

for six days preparing for this struggle. As the days went by, they came to know something about the surly old man's family. They learned that he had suffered bitterly and nursed a deep hatred for the Japanese. Before the outbreak of the anti-Japanese war in 1937, the old man had owned a few mu of land. In addition, he and his two sons were skilful blacksmiths and very diligent. His wife was thrifty and good at running the house. Though far from being prosperous, they were better off than tenant-peasants. After the war had started, Japanese troops occupied their area and, in order to maintain and repair the railway, they pressed the old man and his two sons into service as hard labourers. The old man was surly but even more surly were his sons. One day, when the elder son was carrying rocks, a Chinese overseer collaborating with the Japanese kicked him in the buttocks for amusement. Turning his head and seeing that it was the overseer, he dropped the rock right on the overseer's feet. This brought disaster. The Japanese soldiers took him away at once. Four days later, word came from the enemy stronghold for the old man to claim the corpse of his elder son. The old man was so angry that by the end of his forced labour he fell ill. His illness led to asthma. With hatred for the enemy, the younger son ran off to the mountains to look for the Eighth Route Army. It was said that he was in a company of the 129th Division. With his elder son dead and his younger son away, the old man broke down. He and his wife could hardly have carried on but for the preferential treatment given to the families of servicemen.

With this knowledge of the old man's lot, Dr. Kotnik felt kindly towards him. The old man also seemed to become more friendly. Maybe he felt that he had gone

too far that morning. When they met the next time, the old man broke into a smile — quite an unusual thing. In the evening, he brought the two doctors a handful of big dates and a small bundle of tobacco. Learning that they did not smoke, he took back the tobacco but insisted that they keep the dates. No matter how Kotnis explained, the old man was bent on their accepting his offer. “If you don’t take my dates, it means you look down upon me,” he said. After the old man left, the chairman of the peasants’ association told Kotnis that the old man was already much better than before. In the past, he had paid no heed to the affairs of the village. Now he wanted to attend whatever meetings there were. Once when the cadres intended to explain the ten-point programme for resisting Japan and saving the nation in the village, the old man specially made two loudspeakers for them. This was something unprecedented for him. On another occasion when the women’s association was holding a meeting in a big temple to assign quotas for making shoes for the army, the old man insisted on going inside. When a young girl told him that it was a meeting for women, he straightened his back and asked, “Why should there be any difference between men and women in fighting the Japanese? The Communist Party doesn’t have any such rule.” At the meeting his wife received a quota. He himself asked for another. When he was asked if he could make shoes, he replied, “I can make strings.” When he was told that there was a time limit and no delay could be permitted, the old man straightened his back again and said, “That’s my business, not yours, so what’re you fussing about?” When the time was up, the old man turned in twice as many as his quota. Speaking of this, the chairman of the peasants’ association felt his head and said with a forced

smile, "He has made great progress, but it is difficult to change his temper. He is a narrow-minded, surly old man."

And indeed he was! Dr. Kotnis often saw him losing his temper at others. The most serious incident occurred during the preparations for destroying the railway tracks.

The action was to take place at night and the chairman came to borrow the old man's big hammer. But no soon as had he opened his mouth than he was rebuffed by the old man. No matter how the chairman explained, the old man had only one word to say, "No!" It was because he himself wanted to take part in the action.

"No, you're too old," said the chairman.

"Says who?" asked the old man. "I can do anything except bear children."

The chairman replied, "You're old. Let the young people go."

The old man lost his temper. "Nonsense! When you mobilized others to fight the Japanese, what did you say? You said that the old and the young, the rich and the poor should all fight the Japanese. You said that those who had money should contribute money and those who had strength should contribute strength. But now that I want to contribute my strength, you try to stop me!"

"But you're not well!"

The old man's temper became worse. "You're cursing me. You want to curse me to death? Get out!"

The more they talked, the deeper they got into deadlock. Had the chairman not managed to keep smiling, the old man would have slapped him in the face. Finally, the chairman was driven out.

Kotnis saw clearly what happened in the opposite room. Inwardly he sympathized with the chairman and was cri-

ical of the old man's stubbornness. What if things were held up?

The wind subsided, the sun set, and a bright, full moon rose above the eastern horizon. The land was wrapped in a curtain of darkness and the silence of the night was broken only by the sound of small insects in the grass sending out their song of praise for the spring which gave them warmth and life.

Lying flat on the ground in a graveyard, Kotnis opened his eyes wide to look around. Darkness had enveloped everything. Nothing could be seen except the glimmering railway line meandering in front of them like a huge python and the lights of the enemy's blockhouse twinkling in the distance like will-o'-the-wisps. They were about to begin work on the railway. Kotnis was both glad and worried. They were no longer in the mountains but on the plains north of the Huanghe River used by the enemy as a base for its aggression in China. Who knew what would happen on such a dark night?

From time to time the rumbling of trains could be heard. Invisible crowds of people still lay quietly on the ground. It was not yet time for action. People waited patiently. Not far from Kotnis, low and deep coughs could be heard, followed by gasps. It seemed that someone had held his breath for quite some time in order to suppress a cough. Who was it? Was it the surly old man? He was panting heavily. After looking around, Kotnis crawled swiftly towards him.

Sure enough, it was the old man. He was having a bad fit of asthma and his breath came painfully. A young man was gently patting his back, trying to relieve his pain.

"Can you hold on?" asked Kotnis in a low voice as he moved close to him.

Seeing that it was Kotnis, the old man gasped and said with difficulty, "It doesn't matter. Old disease. It'll be over in a moment." He began coughing softly again.

There was no medicine available to relieve him at that moment. Dr. Kotnis felt sorry for him and rubbed his hands in silence. Looking at the old man, Kotnis hoped that the action would soon begin.

In the distance, a whistle blew, followed by whistles all around. All of a sudden, people lying on the ground leapt to their feet and dashed to the railway. There were so many people that the python-like railway was shielded from view. What could be seen were only countless figures. Holding high bars and picks, they rushed forward courageously and scattered swiftly along the railway tracks. Soon hammering and pickaxing sounds were heard as the rails were loosened. The sounds were like good medicine. The old man lying beside Kotnis leapt to his feet. He was neither panting nor coughing any more. His bent body seemed suddenly to become big and tall. Grabbing his large hammer, he dashed forward, got astride the tracks, wielded the hammer and struck at the rivets. After a few blows, one rivet was broken and the old man moved on to another.

Everything happened so swiftly that, before Kotnis knew exactly what was going on, men and women, old and young, in obedience to a loud whistle, were heaving with their shoulders and hands, and the track was uprooted together with the sleepers. Some people began dismantling, while others carried away objects. Before long, they had hastily but orderly dispersed, fanning out from both sides of the tracks.

There was no battle and no wounded soldiers. Kotnis

and other comrades shouldered the cables which had been cut down and rolled up and headed for the village together with other excited people. The surly old man caught up with them. With two coils of cables suspended from the hammer he carried on his shoulder, he murmured as he walked along, "You little Japanese sons-of-bitches. You killed my son. I'll pull out your tendons."

When the sea of people had scattered, only a bare foundation of the railway was left. Without a shot, several kilometres of railway tracks — the enemy's artery, or the "tendon" as the old man put it — had been thoroughly severed.

In the moonlight, Dr. Kotnis cast a glance at the surly old man walking beside him. A rare smile had appeared on the old man's face.

"Basu, did you see that?" said Kotnis excitedly, touching Basu beside him. "That's what the deputy commander said — get the people organized and they will become mountains and dense forests. These are mountains of mighty strength and the Eighth Route Army depends on them for its existence. Don't we have such mountains in India?"

Basu stared at his companion in surprise. In the moonlight, he couldn't see Kotnis' face very clearly, but he perceived a new light in his friend's eyes, a light he had never seen before. He could not help giving Kotnis a punch. "Dwarko," he said happily. "You've made progress. You're no longer just an envoy of friendship!"

Dr. Kotnis said shyly but earnestly, "I think I should become an envoy of the people's revolution."

Chapter III

The Second Bethune

I

In the thick green woods at the foot of Qingxu Mountain in western Hebei Province, there is an ancient village by the name of Ge Gong. Both the Bethune Medical School and the Bethune International Peace Hospital (officially so named in early 1940) under the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Military Region were located in this village.

When the military region decided to build a tomb to Dr. Norman Bethune in the southern part of the town of Juncheng, all the villagers went to the worksite without anyone telling them to do so. They were particularly fond of tales about doctors. There were modern tales as well as ancient ones. Since the medical school, established with the personal help of Dr. Bethune, and the Bethune International Peace Hospital had moved there, the names and stories of doctors coming from foreign lands to aid China had begun to enrich their centuries-old oral literature. And one of those names was that of Dr. Kotnis who was as yet unknown to them.

One villager, who had worked at the Yixian front as

a stretcher-bearer, told a story of how one day he and a fellow villager were carrying a wounded soldier on a stretcher to the base hospital when his companion suddenly had a heart attack. The poor man turned pale and sweated from pain, unable to get to his feet again. The place they had stopped at was rather out-of-the-way. While he was wondering what to do, a group of armymen came towards them from a distance. Noticing the stretcher lying by the roadside, one of them, a dark-faced man, dismounted and asked what was the matter. Seeing that the man wore an Eighth Route Army armband, the villager told him everything. The man felt the heart of the sick villager, took some pills from his medical kit and helped him to take the medicine with water from his canteen. It worked like magic. In a few minutes, the sick man stopped sweating, his complexion returned to normal and his heart-attack was over. Both villagers and the wounded soldier on the stretcher thanked the man profusely. He made a gesture to stop them, and inspected the soldier's wound before turning to leave. The villager who had fallen ill seized him by the sleeve and asked his name. The man only smiled and said that he was an Eighth Route Armyman. Another comrade in his group told the villager that he was Dr. Kotnis of the Indian Aid-China Medical Mission. After Kotnis had gone, the villager said joyfully, "How lucky I am to have met such a wonderful doctor!"

Another story was about an inspection tour Kotnis made to a branch hospital. He had started off early in the morning and arrived late in the evening, doing more than 50 kilometres on the difficult mountain trail in one day. Everyone in his party was exhausted from the long journey on such a hot day. When they arrived, the comrades of the military sub-region invited them to take a rest. But

Kotnis wanted to inspect the wounded first. The comrades of the military sub-region said to him, "Let's leave that till tomorrow since you've had a long journey today." Kotnis replied, "You've probably forgotten that Dr. Norman Bethune insisted on seeing the wounded before having dinner. How can a doctor rest without seeing his patients first?" The comrades could not but accompany him to inspect all the wards. He treated several of the wounded and then went back. The dark sky was already studded with stars by then. After dinner, when he was about to go to bed, he heard that a wounded soldier some three or four kilometres away was in mortal danger because his nose wouldn't stop bleeding. Kotnis immediately hurried there and gave him first-aid treatment. When he came back, it was nearly daybreak.

There was still another story concerning a more recent event. One day as Kotnis was passing through a village around lunch time on his way back from a visit, he saw an old man wearing a cotton-padded coat and sitting in the sun. His guard, finding that funny, said, "What a queer old man! The wheat is ready for summer harvesting and yet he grills himself in the sun in a cotton-padded coat!" At first Kotnis also felt it strange. He drew closer to the old man and found that he looked very pale and was shivering. Telling his guard to stop, he went towards the old man and asked, "Grandpa, are you unwell?"

"No," said the old man crossly without raising his head.

Kotnis didn't mind. "Then, why are you looking so cold in the cotton-padded coat?" he asked.

The old man didn't answer, nor did he look up, becoming a little impatient.

The guard didn't like the attitude of the old man, but Kotnis continued to smile. He went forward to touch the

old man's forehead and said in surprise, "My goodness! You're running a high fever! Why do you say that you aren't ill?"

"We peasants are used to fevers," said the old man drily. "I shall probably become well again after a bit of sunning."

"You can't go on like this," said Kotnis seriously. "You're very ill. I'm a doctor. Let me examine you please."

His sincerity touched the old man, who at last raised his head. He looked up at the uniformed doctor who spoke halting Chinese and said with a sigh, "I have malaria."

Malaria was very common in the countryside in old China. It was responsible for many deaths, but the peasants, who could hardly feed themselves, had no money to pay for medical treatment. Although it was very convenient for the villagers in the base areas to ask for medical help from the doctors of the Eighth Route Army, people still took an indifferent attitude towards their health, especially the older people who were reluctant to go to a doctor. Kotnis knew the danger of malaria. He helped the old man back into his house, told him to lie down and put a wet towel on his head to lower the fever. He watched the old man for a while and concluded that the case was not very grave, so he left some medicine and went away.

A week later, Kotnis paid a call on the old man again. He was then already well enough to work in the fields. He took out a small basket full of eggs and insisted that Kotnis accept it. Kotnis put the basket on the table and said, "An Eighth Route Armyman is not allowed to accept gifts from the people."

"But then how can I thank you?" murmured the old man tearfully. "I was able to gather in the harvest in time because you cured me."

"That's fine," said Kotnis gladly. "If you're able to take part in farm work and produce more grain to support the War of Resistance, that'll be the best thanks you can give the Eighth Route Army."

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In the spring and summer of that year, many people left the village to work in logistics support groups. When they returned they often brought back stories about Kotnis. As the stories spread, people came to compare Kotnis to Dr. Bethune who was very well-known among them. It was said that Kotnis was exactly the same as Bethune in the excellence of his medical skill, in his insistence on giving medical aid to every patient he came upon and in his attachment to the common people. Even their appearances were almost the same, only Kotnis was darker than Bethune.

Stories of the two doctors spread far and wide. That Dr. Kotnis came from India soon after the death of the Canadian Dr. Bethune was a source of inspiration to the people. It seemed to them that with comrades from foreign lands continually coming to our aid, we would certainly be able to beat the Japanese imperialists.

Where was Kotnis when he became the hero of so many stories?

By that time, he had moved from southern to central and then to western Hebei Province. He was now moving about in the enemy's rear. Sometimes he went with the troops on combat operations, sometimes he did first-aid work at the front. During intervals between fighting, he would visit the wounded soldiers of various army units

and learn about their fighting experiences or would visit the local people nearby, attend meetings in the villages and, as requested by Mao Zedong, tell about life in India and why the Indian people wanted to help the Chinese people fight against the Japanese imperialists.

The new life brought him a lot of joy. He was always busy and pressed for time. His schedule was always crowded. He had to examine patients, give talks, attend meetings and visit political departments to learn ways of disintegrating the enemy troops and so on. Once, at a meeting, he explained how the Indian landlords exploited the peasants in precisely the same way as the Chinese landlords by collecting rent and practising usury and how the Indian peasants often found themselves short of food and clothing after a year's hard toil, just like the Chinese peasants. While speaking, he noticed that many in the audience were in tears and some even wept out loud. He felt astonished that his speech could be so moving. When he finished speaking, he looked at his watch. To his surprise he had spoken for more than two hours, though he was a man of few words.

Through his actions Kotnis was fulfilling the three major tasks put to him by Mao Zedong.

He was, however, somewhat dismayed by the messages from India at this time. In letters and cables from the China Aid Committee, the Indian National Congress was reminding them that the medical team had already greatly outstayed their originally scheduled one year. If he and Basu were to stay on in China, there would be difficulty both with their passports and their careers back home.

The China Aid Committee was well-intentioned. But, should he accept their opinion and go back to India? Kotnis found it difficult to make up his mind. Having

spent sixteen months in the Eighth Route Army, he knew how much he was needed here.

When a choice finally had to be made between going back and staying on, he chose the latter course without hesitation. He said sincerely to a leading comrade of the border region, "The cause of the War of Resistance led by Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party is a great one and I have fallen in love with it and with the base areas. I want to fight with you shoulder to shoulder in weal and woe."

On August 17, 1940, Dr. Kotnis at last came to Ge Gong Village to the great happiness of the warm-hearted people there who had specially erected a platform in the woods east of the village for a grand rally in honour of him and Dr. Basu. When Kotnis was ushered onto the platform to speak, he stammered a little at first from excitement. Then, as if taking an oath, he solemnly announced his determination to follow Dr. Bethune's example.

"Comrades and citizens of the village, thank you. Comrade Basu and I would like to thank you most sincerely for your welcome. We know that Dr. Bethune worked here and that, in February this year, the military region named your school and hospital after him. What I want to say is that I will not fail you in your expectations and will not tarnish Bethune's name. I will follow his example and devote myself to the anti-fascist cause, a cause that belongs to you and us as well as to the whole of mankind."

The acclamation and applause reflected the warmth with which his speech was greeted. A bespectacled young woman comrade in the crowd was moved to tears. Her name was Guo Qinglan and she was a nursing teacher at the Bethune Medical School. She was deeply moved by

the present atmosphere of internationalism, and by the sincerity of Kotnis.

The ovation and applause were an encouragement to Kotnis, but he realized that it also meant that the people expected much from him. The people in the border region might rest assured that Kotnis would not disappoint them. He was to score new achievements here at the fighting post where Bethune had worked. The people of Ge Gong were to add a new chapter to their oral epic about doctors, a chapter with more moving anecdotes about Kotnis and about the love story between Kotnis and Guo Qinglan.

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In September 1940, after the Battle of Laiyuan had broken out, Kotnis and Basu each led a medical team and went respectively to the third and fourth military sub-regions where they set up surgical stations behind the firing lines, so that they could operate on the freshly wounded, brought in by peasant volunteers.

On October 13, they received a cable from Chairman Mao in Yan'an asking them to consider going back to India immediately. As the situation was not clear, Kotnis suggested that Basu return to Yan'an to find out how things stood before making a decision. In the meantime, Kotnis would take up teaching at the Bethune Medical School and wait for word from him.

On the evening of Basu's departure, Kotnis was present at a unique evening party, held in front of a temple at the east end of the village. It was the first party of this kind Kotnis attended since his arrival at the Bethune Medical

School and he was soon caught up in its cheerful atmosphere.

Before the party began, the army men and civilians present called upon each other to sing songs. One group sang *Fighting on the Taibang Mountains*, and another sang *Song of the Guerrillas*. The singing never stopped and it was all very lively. Kotnis was even more surprised when the party formally began. Some of his colleagues performed on stage. A medical doctor of some repute sang to the accompaniment of a Chinese violin, an instrument about half a metre long, played by a post-graduate who had just returned from abroad. The next one to appear on the stage was no one else but the anatomy teacher, a former university student who was usually very quiet. Imitating the graceful movements of ladies of ancient times, he sang a long piece from a classical opera. A well-known professor and his wife were beating time, with their eyes half-closed in appreciation.

As he watched his merry colleagues, disconnected scenes flashed through Kotnis' mind: the forced march in an anti-mopping-up operation, classrooms with doors serving as blackboards and lecture sheets printed on coarse paper. . . . But before he got any further, the anatomy teacher on the stage suddenly called out to him. "Dr. Kotnis! It's your turn to sing something." This was followed by enthusiastic applause and shouting. "Give us a song, Kotnis!" the people cried. It looked like a conspiracy, but it wouldn't be appropriate to refuse under these circumstances. And anyway he happened to love a bit of fun too. He went up onto the stage and began to sing in a rich tenor. He sang in his peculiar Chinese the song that he had learned on board the ship on his way to China:

Arise!

All you who don't want to be slaves,
With our flesh and blood
Let's build a new Great Wall!

When the party was over the happy crowd dispersed, talking and laughing. Kotnis walked slowly along the village path. He had now been at the Bethune Medical School for some time and had obtained a general picture of it.

It had grown up amidst difficulties and hardships. Like the Eighth Route Army, the school had also gone through a process of "growing out of nothing and expanding from a small to a large unit". In April 1938, the head of the Department of Health of the military region set up the first training class for medical cadres with three teachers and fifty students in a gully in Wutai County, Shanxi Province. This fifty-three-person training class was the precursor of the Bethune Medical School. During the second year of the War of Resistance, the training class was enlarged and officially named the Medical School of the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Military Region. At this point, there were still only six teachers and 131 students. When Kotnis arrived a year later, just after the third year of the War of Resistance, the school already had 13 teachers and 343 students. Kotnis became the 14th teacher of this militant community.

The school had grown up in a mountain gully and had met as many difficulties as there were stones on the mountains. The students had constructed a platform, desks and benches themselves with earth and stone in a mud house of less than thirty square metres. However, they preferred to have classes in the courtyard in the sun when the weath-

er was fine. The so-called blackboard was in fact a piece of door blackened with soot. There was a desk in the courtyard but it was meant for the teacher and the students had to sit on the ground and take notes on their knees. The outdoor classroom wasn't bad until the weather grew cold, and then it became very uncomfortable. Both teachers and students got frost-bitten noses and limbs. The students had to breathe on their fountain pens while taking notes or the pens would refuse to work. During the breaks, the teachers and students had to skip and jump about in order to relax their frozen limbs and warm themselves up for the next class.

The school was miserably short of teaching facilities. The pride of this medical college level institution was two microscopes, one brought by Norman Bethune and the other acquired when the Yan'an Health School merged with it. The two microscopes were sacred treasures in the eyes of the teachers and students. When examining slide sections, it was always the teacher who set the microscopes. The students then queued up to have a careful look, while the teacher made sure that nobody touched the instrument. There were no textbooks readily available. Most of the teaching materials were compiled section by section by the teachers in the course of teaching and most of the stencilling and printing was done by the students.

This was how teaching was carried on. But the lack of material facilities wasn't their sole difficulty. There were two things constantly associated with the school and these were the "mopping-up" campaigns conducted by the enemy and production of the means of subsistence.

The war was characterized by "mopping-up" and "anti-mopping-up" campaigns; so was the school. Whenever

there was a "mopping up", the teachers and students had to give up the school campus they had just put in order and at the victorious end of an "anti-mopping-up" operation they would return to find that the campus had practically been demolished by the enemy, so they had to start all over again, not to mention having already paid a price in lives and equipment on the march and in battles.

Production was another great issue. They had to do almost everything themselves. They had to gather firewood from the mountain slopes and go beyond the mountains to fetch grain. It had become routine for the staff and students to collect firewood every Sunday morning. For this purpose they had to travel 15 kilometres on foot back and forth before breakfast. They had to grow their own vegetables which, however, were often destroyed by the enemy before they were ripe. Putting up dykes so as to reclaim land along the river banks was a major construction project of the school and therefore part of the normal work of the teachers and students.

There was still something else constantly associated with the school and that was singing. Singing could always be heard in the intervals between classes, during productive work and on the march. Their happy spirit contrasted sharply with their harsh life and that impressed Kotnis deeply.

But a still sharper and more impressive contrast was that between the lack of facilities and the competence of the teachers. A team of first-class teachers was unexpectedly gathered together in this mountain gully school. Among them were doctors of medical science of international renown, well-known Chinese professors, post-graduates who had studied abroad, and highly talented

graduates from medical colleges in China. When Kotnis attended a meeting of the teaching staff for the first time the principal of the school introduced the other teachers to him. He could scarcely believe that the people standing before him in their homespun cotton army uniforms and looking like common Eighth Route Army soldiers were the bearers of such distinguished credentials. They had been thrown in their lot with that of the school and were always ready to devote their knowledge and indeed everything to it.

Kotnis had met such people in Yan'an but, not knowing much about their background, had not given the matter much thought. Now it was different. He had to work together with them and so couldn't help asking himself why they were willing and happy to work and live here especially when he saw them so optimistic and lively.

These comrades were not reserved with him. Many of the doctors and professors told him of their own experiences, of how they had spent half of their lives in China or abroad longing to help save the motherland and liberate the Chinese people and how they had come to see hope for China in the programme and work of the Communist Party. They never failed to mention the trust and consideration shown to them by the commander of the military region and the principal of the school and always concluded emotionally by saying, "The Communist Party understands and trusts us and is considerate towards us. But the Party leaders are not unduly accommodating towards our shortcomings. Sometimes, they criticize us but even that makes us feel warm."

One student told Kotnis about a chance meeting he had had with Nie Rongzhen, commander of the military region

Commander Nie took him by the hand, led him to the office and poured a cup of tea for him. The student felt embarrassed and Commander Nie said to him jokingly, "What! An intellectual and so shy?" It was a very trivial thing but the student was excited by the recollection. "I'm only sixteen," he said, "and I feel that the commander is so far above me and yet he poured water for me. It was really an honour, you know?"

Kotnis had his own experiences of course. He could tell many stories like that himself. He knew that Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and the leading comrades at various levels of the Party all placed great hopes on the intellectuals who had come over to the ranks of the revolution. How often he had heard in the Eighth Route Army the statement: "The War of Resistance needs science and intellectuals." He thought of a song, *The Song of the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College*, which was very popular among the students. Its opening lines were: "A group of worthy sons of the Chinese nation gathered by the side of the Huanghe River. Liberating mankind and saving the nation are our duties." Yes, it was the sense of responsibility for the liberation of the motherland of all oppressed peoples that had brought them to the side of the revolution. The Party, like a furnace, was smelting, tempering and turning these raw materials into invincible weapons of steel.

One year later, at his wedding with Guo Qinglan, Kotnis said excitedly; "The strength of the Communist Party is indeed infinite. You can see this strength at work in the war, in the mass movement, in the united front, in the government organizations and also in each and every one of us intellectuals."

Kotnis fell in love with the school and acquired the same look of confidence as the other teachers. So far as the facilities were concerned, there was simply no comparison between the school and the two colleges he had attended, the Grant Medical College and the G. S. Medical College at Bombay, but he soon adapted himself to the style of teaching here. Like the other teachers, he also stood under a big tree to give lectures and of course also suffered from the freezing cold. He took part in the "anti-mopping-up" campaigns too and gave lectures during intervals between marches. He joined the others in travelling 15 kilometres before breakfast to gather firewood. He received the same meagre supplies as the others and sometimes even declined to take them. During a rapid march, his leather shoes became so worn out that they didn't fit. As a result, he got blisters on his feet. The quartermaster insisted on issuing him a new pair of shoes. He turned down the offer, saying, "Shoes are hard to come by now. Better keep them for the needy. My shoes can still be used. Besides, with the new shoes I might get blisters all the same. What I want is training." He wrapped his feet up in a piece of cloth and continued to limp along on the march.

His determination found expression in his actions. He didn't disappoint the expectations of the people of the border region. He proved to be a remarkable teacher of surgery. His sense of responsibility, his appetite for academic research, his teaching abilities and especially his readiness to share hardships with the local people won him wide praise and the trust of the Party and the people.

Some time later, Jiang Yizhen, principal of the Bethune



Medical School came to Kotnis' office with an order from Nie Rongzhen, commander of the military region. Jiang Yizhen gladly informed Kotnis that the latter had been appointed the first director of the Norman Bethune International Peace Hospital.

"Am I qualified for the job?" was Kotnis' immediate response.

"Of course you are," replied Jiang Yizhen earnestly. "I congratulate you. And Commander Nie has asked me to convey to you his hopes that you will become a second Bethune."

Seeing that Kotnis still hesitated, Jiang Yizhen then spoke at some length on his own experiences in hospital administration and solemnly produced a stencilled pamphlet from his pocket.

"This pamphlet was written by Chairman Mao on December 21, 1939 in commemoration of Comrade Bethune," he said. "It explains everything about being a Bethune-type of medical worker. This is the only copy I have and it was brought to me by a comrade from Yan'an. Let me give it to you as a gift."

Having said good-bye to Jiang Yizhen, Kotnis continued to ponder over Commander Nie's hope that he would become a second Norman Bethune. He felt it was too heavy a duty.

That night he hardly closed his eyes at all. What should his first step be?

He lit the vegetable-oil lamp, took up the pamphlet given to him by Jiang Yizhen, entitled "In Memory of Norman Bethune", and began to read it carefully.

The new director was resolved to run the hospital in the spirit of Norman Bethune. Apart from Mao Zedong's pamphlet, he collected all the writings and letters left be-

hind by Bethune in China and often asked comrades who had worked with Bethune to tell him what they knew about him. He was good at listening to all sorts of useful opinions and would invite the teachers of the Bethune Medical School and the doctors, nurses and in-patients at the hospital to give their ideas on how to run the hospital.

After a series of meetings, they established some guiding principles for the orientation of the hospital and these principles were: Adhere to Chairman Mao's instruction "Rescue the dying, heal the wounded, practise revolutionary humanitarianism"; carry on the traditions of the Red Army and the spirit of Norman Bethune; put the needs of war and the welfare of the patients before everything else; and do not stick to outdated conventions, do not copy mechanically from other hospitals and refrain from being exclusive or conservative. Bethune was famous for his strictness. So was Kotnis. He, too, insisted on being strict. He led his comrades in working out a number of good administrative policies such as organizing convalescent patients into squads and platoons, having the leading cadres of the hospital inspect the wards in turn, and holding weekly meetings at which the doctors and nurses could report on their work and bi-monthly meetings to solicit suggestions and criticisms. In view of the fact that the hospital was also charged with the task of training medical workers, he put forward the slogan: "Learn something, be good at it and put it into practice."

Kotnis had a deep understanding of and great admiration for the spirit of Norman Bethune, that is, a deep sense of responsibility. He always kept his word and corrected his mistakes when he found them. He was more strict with himself than with others and was an example in observing all the rules of the hospital, rules he had par-

ticipated in making. He was exceedingly busy with administrative and medical work but never gave that as an excuse to avoid such routine duties as inspecting the wards. He attended every meeting that required his presence and was never merely present but would always look into every problem and try to get it straightened out. The work of the hospital soon showed a great improvement as a result of all the painstaking and meticulous efforts of Kotnis and his comrades.

Kotnis was rigorous and efficient in his work. Once, some comrades suggested at a meeting that in view of Bethune's experience which had been proved useful in practice, it would be advantageous to set up battlefield first-aid teams and mobile medical teams and keep them in a state of readiness to meet the emergency needs of the war. After the meeting, Kotnis immediately discussed the matter further with other leading cadres of the hospital. They accepted the suggestion as correct and promptly put it into practice. Kotnis personally led a battlefield first-aid team.

He was up to his ears in work. He felt, however, very happy himself. In a letter to Basu, he stated that he was proud of being able to take part in all the practical work. He wrote: "As regards my work during last year, I am in charge of the International Peace Hospital (not in name only; I am doing a lot of executive work). And I did, personally under my direction, over 450 surgical operations."

In another letter, he wrote: "However, in this small interval, having joined in the active life of all around here, I am experiencing great transformation within myself."

The transformation within him was bound to react on

his practice and find expression in his actions. And as the comrades around him observed the change.

There was a male head nurse who didn't like his own job. It seemed to him that a head nurse had to be like a mother and take care of practically everything. He had to take care of the nurses, the medical orderlies and the changing of dressings as well as look after the sick and wounded. At the time, the hospital was divided into two sections and the head nurse was in charge of the administrative work of one section. When a person is in a bad mood, he is liable to be indiscreet in his speech. So it happened that when he was changing the dressing on a wounded man, he was not careful enough and caused the man pain. The patient was unhappy and said, "Couldn't you do it more gently?" The head nurse, also unhappy, retorted sharply, "How more gently? I was gentle enough." The wounded man then became angry and said some unkind words which led to a quarrel. By coincidence Kotnis came across them just then during his routine inspection of the wards. He investigated the reason for the quarrel and led the head nurse away. Seeing that Kotnis looked very stern, the head nurse became quite nervous. They went into the director's office. Kotnis asked the head nurse to sit down and began to talk about the wounded man without mentioning the quarrel at all. After giving an account of how and when the man had received his wound, he said, "Here is a man wounded in battle for the cause of national liberation. Although he was so badly wounded, he never complained of the pain on the battlefield. Why should he complain now when you've only hurt him slightly? Because on the battlefield, he had only hatred for the enemy who had wounded him, while in the hospital, he regards you as someone close to him. C

course he feels bad when you cause him pain through your carelessness. If he looks upon you as someone close to him, you ought to regard him in the same light, too."

When the head nurse admitted that he was wrong, Kotnis said, "You've been to Yan'an. Have you ever met Comrade Mao Zedong?" The head nurse said that he had not. Then Kotnis nodded and said, "That's a pity. I met him and had a long talk with him. He told me that the War of Resistance needs many, many medical workers like you. When there are medical workers around, the soldiers don't worry. Whenever I recall that conversation, I feel a great responsibility. Young men, we should have a strong sense of responsibility. With it, we no longer become impatient in face of difficulties in our work because it is our responsibility to overcome these difficulties."

The head nurse was thoroughly convinced. When they parted, he smiled at Kotnis and said, "It's really a surprise for me. I never expected you to be so much like a seasoned Eighth Route Army cadre, considering that you've joined our ranks for only less than two years."

What he expected of the head nurse, he demanded of himself too. He was well-known in the hospital for his good humour. When it was necessary to do skin-grafting for soldiers wounded in the abdomen, some of the female nurses felt shy and were unwilling to do it. Kotnis didn't reproach them. Instead, he took them with him and did the operation himself. After a few times, the nurses gradually became accustomed to it. Sometimes, amputations were done in the night and it was necessary to bury the amputated limbs on the wild wasteland. As some of the very young medical orderlies were afraid, Kotnis led them there and did the burying together with them. Gradually, the young medical orderlies lost their fear. Two

anecdotes frequently circulated among the comrades of the hospital. One of them related to an incident during an operation. A fly had got into the operating room and buzzed about over Kotnis' head. A nurse became nervous and reached out to hit it. Unfortunately, he fell down on the operating table instead of driving off the fly. The operating room was contaminated and the operation had to stop. That was a grave accident, but Kotnis didn't become angry. Instead, while the operating room was being disinfected again, he quietly explained to the staff around him the importance of disinfection and sterilization. The other anecdote was about an examination. A nurse in charge of enema was inexperienced and didn't do his job properly. As a result, a patient with feces still in his intestines was placed on the operating table. When Kotnis was about to examine him through the rectoscope, the feces gushed out. Kotnis was soiled all over and the operation had to stop. This time, Kotnis was the direct victim and the nurse concerned was frightened. But, just as before, Kotnis neither became angry nor complained. He washed his face, changed his clothes and continued the operation calmly. After it was over, he called all the nurses in the surgical department together and gave them a lecture on how to do enema and how to check whether it was properly done or not.

He was good-humoured and always wore a kind smile on his face. But if anyone took advantage of his good humour by being negligent, he would become very stern. As a result of long years of guerrilla life, some medical workers had also acquired some so-called "guerrilla habits". Kotnis couldn't tolerate such habits or anything slightly resembling them.

Once a laboratory assistant who had hemorrhoids underwent an operation and was forbidden any stimulating foods. However, the young comrade was addicted to chili peppers. So he began a "guerrilla campaign" against the doctors. He would eat chili peppers on the sly, when the doctors weren't around. Kotnis had heard about his addiction long ago. One day, Kotnis suddenly appeared when that comrade was having lunch and discovered half a pepper buried at the bottom of his bowl of food. Kotnis lost his good humour and said severely, "As a medical worker, don't you feel ashamed to take the lead in disobeying the doctor's orders? A patient should resist temptation."

When he became well again and resumed his work, this laboratory assistant one day filled out a laboratory report in pencil. That wasn't allowed, because figures written in pencil soon become blurred. If the figures were misleading, the diagnosis might be wrong. However, the comrade used a pencil because he had no alternative. His fountain pen had gone wrong and there was no place to have it repaired. To his surprise, a few minutes after the laboratory report was sent out, Kotnis came to him with the report and asked why he had filled it out in pencil. The laboratory assistant explained that something was wrong with his fountain pen. Kotnis listened and, without saying a word, gave him his own fountain pen. Before the assistant realized what was happening, Kotnis had moved away. He reflected for a long time, his eyes following Kotnis who was walking farther and farther off. Deeply moved, he said to himself, "Director Kotnis, no wonder everybody says that you are the second Bethune." That Kotnis was able to live up to this title was the logical outcome of the "great transformation" within him.

The change in Kotnis was many-sided and the improvement in his command of Chinese was an outstanding aspect.

Kotnis had had some amusing experiences because of the language barrier. Once, in a restaurant in Guangzhou he had ordered roast chicken, and been given grilled frog. And one evening, the Indian doctors went for a walk to the outskirts of Yan'an. Being in a happy mood, they wandered about and headed for the hill in the back to have a look at the Military Hospital of the Eighth Route Army then under construction. It was very cold that evening and they had put on army overcoats and boots captured from the Japanese. On the way, they were stopped by the patrolling militiamen. Kotnis tried to explain who they were in his broken Chinese, but it was of no use. The militiamen couldn't understand him and became very suspicious about his strange foreign accent. They were detained until their identity was established after a telephone call to Yan'an. However, the misunderstanding made them known to the people of Yan'an. They made many friends on the way between Guaimao and Yan'an. Later on, even the children came to know them and dared to pull at their clothes and call them by their names. After that, when they met army patrolmen, they had only to say "India, Guaimao" and everything would be all right.

The third misunderstanding happened when Kotnis and his friends were invited to a dinner party in southeast Shanxi. When the dinner was over, the host asked them whether they had had enough to eat or not. Kotnis didn't

quite understand the host's question. He hesitated a little and said, "No, no." The hospitable host blushed and hastened to serve him more food. Kotnis was stunned. When he realized what was wrong, he hurriedly patted his own belly and said, "Full, full, full." Everybody present laughed heartily and so did he.

Of course, there were certainly more than three such amusing incidents, but they left a deep impression on other people and were recorded in their diaries.

Once he began teaching in the Bethune Medical School, mastery of the Chinese language became of vital importance, so he worked even harder at it than before. After six months, he acquired a fairly good command of the language and was able to give lectures in Chinese without difficulty. Needless to say, simple conversations were no problem at all. He could even use some classical Chinese expressions correctly.

His achievement was the result of hard work. The following story could perhaps illustrate the point.

The story was about Kotnis and a dentist. The dentist used to work in the Eighth Route Army Hospital in Yan'an. When Kotnis was there, the two of them had become good friends. In 1941, the dentist was also sent to work in the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Military Region. On learning this, Kotnis immediately wrote a letter to the dentist to the effect that, firstly, he was very much looking forward to meeting the dentist again since they had parted for a long time, and secondly, he was hoping that the dentist could come to work at the Bethune Hospital, if the military region would agree. The dentist was quite touched by the warmly worded letter. But on reading it again and examining the complimentary close "Yours ever,

Kotnis" written in elegant and forceful handwriting, he could not help wondering if the letter had really been written by Kotnis. Could Kotnis, who had known only a little Chinese less than two years ago, have written the letter in such idiomatic and even somewhat literary Chinese?

By happy coincidence, the medical department of the military region decided to send the dentist to work under Kotnis and he was very pleased.

He arrived at the hospital one afternoon and tried to see Kotnis as soon as he had gone through the necessary formalities of reporting his arrival. An assistant told him that Kotnis had just finished an operation and was probably taking a rest in his room. The dentist immediately went to see him. Approaching the door of Kotnis' room he heard someone reciting something in a low voice in the room.

He looked through the window and saw Kotnis bending over a desk. While reciting, Kotnis kept moving one hand on the desk as if he were writing something.

The dentist pushed open the door and entered. Of course, the two were very excited to see each other again. When they had both calmed down, the dentist took up the notebook from which Kotnis was reciting. On the cover of the notebook was a line of neatly written Chinese characters: "Chinese Vocabulary — Pronunciation and Meaning." The notebook itself explained why Kotnis had made such rapid progress in two years.

The dentist recalled his own experience learning to read and write Chinese characters when he was young. As he was a naughty and impatient boy, there was always something wrong with his homework. His teacher was a strict and severe man who beat his pupils on the palm with

ruler, one blow for each incorrectly written character in their homework. The dentist grinned and said jovially, "I learned every character at the cost of a blow from the ruler."

"Same here," said Kotnis smiling.

"Why, who would hit you? Our teacher in nursing?" asked the dentist somewhat puzzled.

"Oh, no." Kotnis made a gesture to cut the dentist short. "But there's a ruler on my heart," he continued. "That ruler is the pain I feel when I can't make myself understood to the common people. It's a ruler that hits on the heart and hurts more than blows on the palm."

The Chinese language was only one aspect of Kotnis' study. He had to learn many more things, ranging from the use of hoes in Yan'an to the use of bush-knives in western Hebei Province, from how to peel a potato to how to remove the superfluous branches of a tomato plant. In those hard days, he had to produce food for himself with his own hands like everybody else. He had to grow vegetables, open up wasteland, collect firewood and help the cooks in the preparation of food. It was a common practice in the Eighth Route Army. Everybody had to work since everybody had to eat. But it was to his credit that he always took the trouble to learn to do all these simple but demanding jobs of his own accord, as if they were medical work.

He made no mean progress in these tasks. Take the mending of clothes for example. Like every soldier in the Eighth Route Army, he also had a sewing kit. Whenever and wherever his clothes were torn, he mended them himself. In spite of his large hands, his needle work was good enough to win the admiration of many woman fighters.

He endeavoured to imitate the bearing and ways of the

Chinese and as he looked somewhat like a southerner from Hainan Island, he was often taken for a Chinese by those who didn't know him. In a village in central Hebei, he met a local youth who wanted to meet Basu and asked him, "Have you ever seen that foreigner?" Obviously the young man thought he was a Chinese. Kotnis was greatly pleased at the misunderstanding.

His efforts in this respect weren't wasted. They helped him in making contact with the masses and in his work. They were helpful even in military operations against the enemy. On the eve of an "anti-mopping-up" operation in the autumn of 1941, in face of a superior enemy force, all the hospital personnel were disguised as civilians so as to work under cover. But what could be done about Kotnis? Everyone was worried and no idea was forthcoming. Just then, Kotnis came in from outside. He wore a white turban made of hand-woven cloth and a greasy, dirty black jacket. Everybody looked at him in wonder. He rolled up his sleeves and said, "I'm a blacksmith from Wangkuai. How do you like it?"

Wangkuai was a village famous in western Hebei Province for its blacksmiths. With his dark face and sturdy build, Kotnis looked quite like a blacksmith and his dress and manners were exactly those of a blacksmith from Wangkuai. Everybody scrutinized him closely and applauded.

He was changing, both without and within. In a letter to Basu dated January 4, 1942, he summarized his progress in the past year as follows:

So far as my studies are concerned, the lack of political books in English is a big difficulty (I have not received books sent from Yan'an and it is impossible to

find any here). This was especially true in the first half of last year. But anyway I already know a good number of Chinese characters now and this enables me to read some Chinese books such as the history of the Chinese revolutionary movement. Moreover, I can read the newspapers practically without referring to the dictionary. The editorials (those of the *Liberation Daily* in Yan'an in particular) make very interesting reading, especially their analysis of the changes in the political situation. The problem now is the pressure of time, as administrative work has taken up the best part of my time. In short, I am not satisfied with my studies in political theory.

Despite his dissatisfaction, he was fully aware of his progress in that year and thought that 1941 was "a most important year in my life".

In that year, an event of great significance took place in Kotnis' life.

During an operation against the enemy's "mopping-up" campaign in the autumn of 1941, Kotnis said to a staff-officer who was with him in a cave in the Luotuo'an Mountains, "I want to settle down in China."

Besides showing his determination to stay in China to the end of the anti-Japanese war, that statement revealed a secret — he was in love with a young woman who understood him. And she was Guo Qinglan, the teacher in nursing who had been moved by his profound devotion to the cause.

She was a good-looking, pleasant woman and her face was always lit with a happy smile, a symbol of the irrepressible joy of life in the base areas. Her light footsteps were always accompanied by sweet singing. A teacher respected

by her students, she was conscientious and meticulous in her work.

When Guo Qinglan recalled her experiences during this period, she wrote of her happy, unforgettable moments together with Kotnis as follows:

Having out-manoeuvred the enemy's "mopping-up" our troops reassembled. We met Comrade Kotnis while we were heading back to the school campus. That night, the mountain peaks and valleys were bathed in moonlight. We camped in an unknown village which had been demolished by the enemy. The air still smelled of scorched earth and it was rather cold in the chilling autumn wind. We built a fire and sat around it, back to back. Kotnis faced the wind.

I had a heart-to-heart talk with Kotnis. He asked me like an elder brother whether I missed home and what members there were in my family. I was then only twenty-four and had not seen my mother for five years. The war upset everything and letters could not get through. How I missed my home!

I told him that I was born in Fenyang, Shanxi Province. I lost my father at the age of one. My mother brought me up and sent me to study in a nursing school where I also worked part-time. After graduation, I became a nurse in the Peking Union Hospital in Beiping.

Like all my fellow countrymen, I was swept up into the torrential tide of the anti-Japanese war. In May 1939, I and a girl friend, an undergraduate at Yenking University, joined the Eighth Route Army through the help of a friend from New Zealand. I worked in the clinic of the Third Military Sub-Region for a short time

and was then transferred to teach in the Bethune Medical School. . . .

At this point, I discovered that Kotnis was lost deep in thought. From that time on, he showed more concern than before. It was a true comradely concern, like that of a brother for a younger sister. I gradually found that he was very much the same as a fine Chinese youth in character and personality. He was devoted to seeking the truth and had a boundless sense of responsibility for his work.

Out of a profound friendship and shared ideals, a sincere love began to grow between us, a couple of young people of different nationalities.

Yes, both Kotnis and Guo Qinglan had left behind a relatively comfortable and easy life to join in the anti-fascist struggle and face the severe trials at the front behind the enemy lines. This was the grandest cause in the war years. A strong sense of patriotism and internationalism constituted a solid foundation for their union. Both of them were cheerful, lively, optimistic and honest. Besides, they were able to communicate their feelings through the English language, which facilitated the rapid growth of their love.

Guo Qinglan continued:

One day in November 1941, soon after we returned to the school campus following the autumn "mopping-up", Principal Jiang Yizhen had a discussion with me about our operation. He said that Kotnis did remarkably well both in fighting and in his work. He had not only fulfilled his task as a doctor but also as a teacher. Then Jiang Yizhen changed the subject and asked me, "What do you think of him?"

I answered, "He's quite all right. The latest "anti-mopping-up" campaign was very arduous even for me. It couldn't have been easy for him. He is a foreigner and has left his warm homeland to fight with us in the North. I admire him greatly for his political firmness and progressive ideas. Working together with him every day, you would forget that he's a foreigner."

Jiang Yizhen said gladly, "In other words, the two of you have fallen in love. Well, you should help and care for each other in future. I'd suggest that you get married. It'll be good for you to work together for victory in our anti-Japanese war and for the realization of your shared ideals."

Two days later, Kotnis came to me with a marriage certificate signed by Comrade Zhu Liangcai, Head of the Political Department of the Military Sub-Region. Kotnis was as delighted as could be and, for the first time in our lives, we felt the happiness of true love which had developed in the midst of war.

On November 25, a joyous wedding party was held for us in a room temporarily vacated for the occasion. Our colleagues and the villagers came to offer their congratulations and the villagers referred to Kotnis as "China's son-in-law". Amid loud laughter, the elder ladies of the village jovially wished that we would soon have a fat baby.

Kotnis was well pleased with his wife. In a letter to Basu, he wrote, "My wife is an elegant and handsome Chinese girl. She is not timid or shy as Chinese girls usually are. She is an open-minded and magnificent teacher in nursing...."

When he wrote to Basu summing up his progress in 1941, Kotnis, out of modesty, omitted to mention the general tribute paid to him by the local people. By that time, he had already acquired an intimate nickname — “Black Mother” — from the sick and wounded in the hospital as well as from the local people of Ge Gong Village.

“Mother” is a highly emotive word, arousing special emotions in everybody irrespective of age and background. And precisely because of this peculiarity of the word, its application has been extended by the people to describe the Party, the motherland and their most trusted ones. But it is most unusual to call a man of thirty by such a special word. Kotnis was an exception, however. Those who didn’t know him well and who heard him called “Black Mother” for the first time could accept the word “black” because of his dark skin colouring, but they found it difficult to understand why he was called “mother”. However, after seeing him at work or hearing stories about him, they soon endorsed the name. This was a process of recognition. And here is a true story told by a former in-patient of the surgical department of the hospital about his own experience.

He was a communications officer in a regiment. He first heard the name “Black Mother” from a little girl named Zhuozi. She was the daughter of his landlady and was seven or eight years old. She too used to be one of Kotnis’ patients. She had had intestinal worms and was constantly complaining of stomach pains. Her little face was as pale as wax. Finding that she was ill, Kotnis treated her personally and she improved gradually. In

order to help her to recover sooner, Kotnis always gave her his own food rations when there was anything good and nutritious. After she was well again, Zhuozi became a frequent visitor at the hospital and got to know all the sick and wounded staying in the homes of peasants near the hospital.

The communications officer's case was very serious. He couldn't even leave his bed, which very much depressed him. One day, as he was musing on plans for his future, the door suddenly opened and Zhuozi came in with a kitten in one hand and a rubber ball, a gift from Kotnis, in the other.

"Uncle, will you play with me?" she called out gaily as she stepped into the room.

The officer's thoughts were interrupted. He glanced at the child and said tiredly, "Go and play by yourself."

"No, I want you to play with me," insisted the girl.

"Don't bother me. I'm feeling low." Somewhat annoyed, he waved her aside.

"Ha, ha," Zhuozi laughed. "Black Mother guessed that. He knew you were feeling bad."

The officer didn't understand and asked, "What do you say?"

"Well, Black Mother said that you must be anxious to leave the hospital, so he sent me to come here and play with you."

He could understand that the child had come on orders but who was Black Mother?

He put the question to Zhuozi which annoyed the child. "You don't even know that Director Kotnis is Black Mother. You really are backward. I won't play with you."

Having said that with her lips curled in scorn, the child left. The officer wasn't worried about her anger because

he knew that a child's mood changed quickly. What perplexed him was how Kotnis had become "Black Mother".

Through his own experience, he soon found the answer. Yes, he knew more than anybody else about Kotnis' considerate concern for the wounded because he was an old-timer in the hospital.

He had been severely wounded in a battle in Xingtang six months earlier. The last thing he remembered was that he had thrown himself upon the regimental commander who was speaking on the telephone. When he regained consciousness, the first thing he saw was the warm eyes of a young man. A nurse told him that the man was the director of the hospital and had never left his side for the three days he'd been in a coma.

He didn't know why the director should have stayed with him all that time. He only knew that the director was a young man with a dark, square face and big eyes. The director looked exhausted and his eyes were red. But there was always a faint, sweet smile on his face. Only a sympathetic and kind-hearted man could smile that way. It was a smile that gave comfort and warmth.

That was only his first impression, which was not enough to explain why the director was referred to as "mother". It was only afterwards that he came to really understand Kotnis.

A few days after his first encounter with Kotnis, the officer learned from a young medical orderly that his case was very grave. A shell fragment had got into his waist and hurt the *cauda equina* nerve. His lower limbs were paralysed and he would be disabled. The news was so unexpected that he lost control of himself. When the nurse brought him lunch that day, he became unreasonably cross

and threw the bowl on the ground. A few minutes later Kotnis came in wearing his surgical gown and with beads of perspiration on his forehead. It seemed that he had just come out of the operating room. The officer thought that Kotnis had come to settle accounts with him and was prepared for unpleasantness. To his surprise, Kotnis did not have any harsh words for him. Instead he was all smiles and said, "That young comrade of ours has offended you, has she? Let me apologize on her behalf. We shall be glad to have your criticisms."

Kotnis was very sincere. The officer suddenly felt embarrassed and hastened to say, "Oh no, don't say that. It's all my fault. The nurse has been very good. I have no complaint at all."

"Then why were you so angry?"

Unable to explain, the officer sighed heavily.

The nurse came again with a bowlful of rice and placed it on a small table. The officer looked at her in embarrassment, secretly regretting his earlier misbehaviour. The nurse didn't seem to mind. She said to Kotnis, "Director, will you go and have a rest? Let me feed him."

"No, you'd better take the food back and ask the cook to keep it warm. He'll have lunch a few minutes later."

The nurse went away. Kotnis drew a bench near to his bed and said with a smile, "Feeling bad, eh? I can understand you. I was diagnosed recently as having epilepsy. Do you know what epilepsy is?"

"You have epilepsy?" The officer was startled because he knew that epileptic fits could be very dangerous. He knew that two of his acquaintances had died of epilepsy. One of them had had a fit while crossing a river. He fell into the water and was drowned. The other had died after having numerous convulsions. He could hardly believe

that the jovial director before him was the victim of such a disease.

Kotnis saw his surprise. "You don't believe that, do you?" he said. "But it's true. I'm a victim of epilepsy. I'm also a doctor. I know how epilepsy will develop and I felt very bad indeed when I heard the news. However, I later thought of a man..." Kotnis stopped for a moment as if to recall something and then continued in a voice filled with emotion. "Whenever I think of him, I become optimistic. It was in July 1939 when I was working in the Eighth Route Army Hospital in Yan'an. One day, Atal, Basu and I were sent for to call on a leading comrade of the Central Committee who had fallen off a horse and broken his right arm. When we got to his home, he wasn't in and so we were led to his office. When we saw him, we were all startled. Can you guess what he was doing? He was bending over his desk trying hard to write with his left hand. A bone fracture is very painful and his face was covered with sweat. When we examined him, we found that his shirt was wet through. But he was still working. What will-power! We reproached him for neglecting his health, but can you guess how he answered? He said, 'A man must work for the Party as long as he is alive.' Now, that is a common enough remark in the Eighth Route Army but I couldn't control myself when I heard it then. You must understand that he has already done so much for the Party and for the cause of the liberation of the Chinese people. When I think of him, I feel ashamed of the pessimism I felt when I heard my diagnosis. I made up my mind to learn from him. So long as I'm still breathing, I shall fight on."

"Who was the man?"

"Zhou Enlai — Vice-Chairman Zhou!"

“Him!”

Both of them were silent for a long time. And then Kotnis said, “How about having some food?”

“O.K.,” said the officer, biting his lower lip.

Kotnis brought the food to the officer and personally spoon-fed him. As the officer was still unable to move or go to the toilet by himself, he was always given a light semi-liquid diet. That day, he had noodles in chicken broth. Not a word was spoken while Kotnis was feeding him. Both of them were meditating on the story. When the officer had finished his lunch, Kotnis said, “Well, we can continue to exchange opinions in future. You can criticize me or any other comrade. But I do hope that you won’t vex yourself or refuse food any more.”

His tone was so calm and sympathetic. That was probably why he was called “Black Mother” by other comrades. When a child does something wrong, a kind mother will neither spoil him nor reprimand him tactlessly. What she will do is use the warmth of her love to move him so that he will willingly accept her advice. She will enlighten and guide the child with the most striking stories so that he will feel sorry for his own mistake. The officer felt that there was in Kotnis a special quality, a kind of tenderness and considerate love. It was greater than a mother’s love.

The longer he stayed in the hospital, the more he experienced of this kind of motherly concern and consideration. Like a careful mother, Kotnis could read what was on the officer’s mind from a casual glance. As the officer had been confined to his bed for a long time, his appetite naturally diminished. One day, Kotnis asked him after lunch how he liked the food. He didn’t find it tasty but he felt it improper to say so and answered casually, “Very good.”

"Is it salty enough?" Kotnis asked again.

"I don't quite know. May be just right," answered the officer without thinking.

Kotnis took note of that remark. Two days later, he sent the officer some dried haws which he had asked a comrade to buy from a shop selling traditional Chinese medicinal herbs 15 kilometres away.

It is a mother's unique characteristic to be able to know what is on one's mind from a mere glance or remark. But sometimes, Black Mother could tell how the officer was feeling without even these clues. During the Chinese New Year, an opera troupe came to the village to give a performance. The stage was set up at one end of the village and the sound of the music could be heard throughout the village. All the wounded soldiers who were able to walk went to the performance, leaving the communications officer alone in the hospital. He felt quite lonely. To his surprise, right after the performance, Kotnis brought some actors from the troupe to his room. The actors gave him a special performance. Kotnis invited an actor to sing a North Shaanxi folk song, because the officer was a native of that area. The song reminded him of his childhood days when, perched on his mother's back, he used to go and watch local opera performances.

Not everyone agreed with Kotnis, however. The officer lying in his bed had also heard some unfavourable comments about him. Once when Kotnis was changing a dressing for him and held the used dressing with pus on it near to his nose to smell it, an expression of disapproval crossed the face of a doctor standing behind Kotnis. After Kotnis had left the room, he said, "How can a medical worker put dressing with pus on it under his nose? He should pay attention to hygiene." The officer didn't like

that comment. He had heard that Dr. Bethune did the same thing when he changed dressings. According to experienced surgeons, the smell of the dressing could be helpful in determining the degree of infection of the wound. The next time Kotnis did the same while changing the dressing for him, the other doctor openly voiced his opposition. Kotnis knitted his eyebrows and retorted gravely, "If his wound were clean and free of bacteria and pus, what need would there be for you and me to be here?"

A good doctor is selfless. One cannot make a good doctor unless he is a noble-hearted man. The communications officer felt, however, that the virtues of a good doctor were the extension of a mother's love.

But concern and consideration can't take the place of treatment. Kotnis personally performed a second operation on the officer and took out the shell fragment which had been pressing on the *cauda equina* nerve. At last, the officer's lower limbs regained sensation. But as the weather was hot, the incision unfortunately became infected. Pus and serous fluid began to ooze incessantly from the wound. In order to control the infection, it was necessary to wash the wound with a normal saline solution. But the solution flowed about and soaked everything; even the four cotton cushions placed under the officer's shoulders and hips were soaked through. As a result of pressure and soaking, his back began to show signs of erythema, foretokens of bedsore. If he were to get bedsores, it would be extremely painful for him. For three days, Kotnis came to his room whenever he had time, but every time, he came in and went away with knitted brows. On the fourth day, however, he came in smiling with a big bundle in his arms. As soon

as he entered, he said loudly, "Come and try this." The bundle in his arms was a big thick quilt, with a big round hole in the centre. Kotnis and the nurses managed to put the quilt under the officer and began to wash his wound again. It worked very well. The saline solution all flowed down through the hole. Kotnis was exultant.

From then on, Dr. Kotnis came almost every day to massage him as a prevention against bedsores. When Kotnis massaged him gently on the back while chatting with him, the officer couldn't help thinking of his mother. When he had a stomachache as a child, his mother would pat him tenderly while humming sweet songs. A mother's love was so warm. But he had been deprived of it for many years as his mother had died of illness when he was nine. Now, in the big family of revolution, he found this warm love once again.

.....

The officer had now recovered from his wound and was about to be discharged from the hospital.

His joy can be imagined. Yet, there was also a trace of bitterness in it. He was leaving that day to join his company and his former comrades-in-arms in new battles, but that also meant he had to part with his new friends — the doctors, nurses and especially Black Mother. At that thought, he felt warm all over as if his blood were flowing faster.

Zhuozi flew into the ward like a swallow, followed by Kotnis. They had come to say good-bye to him. He took their hands and walked out of the door. Just as they got to the entrance of the hospital, he stopped suddenly and turned back as if he had remembered something important.

"What's the matter?" asked Kotnis.

"Oh, it's nothing important. I'll be back in a minute," answered the officer.

"Wait a minute. I'm coming with you," said Zhuozi who quickly caught up with him.

He took the girl's hands, rushed back to his room, stopped before the bed of a newcomer and placed at the bedside a bunch of wild roses presented to him by Kotnis the previous evening at the farewell party. He said to the newcomer, "Comrade, you may rest assured that you will certainly recover from your wound, because we have Black Mother who is like Dr. Bethune!"

Zhuozi laughed at him. "What are you saying? The uncle is asleep."

She was right. There was still the smell of chloroform in the room. The newcomer who had just undergone an operation was still under anaesthesia and certainly could not have heard him. But that wasn't important. The newcomer would certainly come to the same conclusion through his own experience.

6

If the director of the hospital was a man like Bethune, then what about the other doctors and nurses?

All those who had ever been to the Bethune International Peace Hospital soon discovered that everybody, from the director to the medical orderlies and in-patients, was familiar with stories about Bethune and had made it a practice to learn from his deeds.

It was one of Bethune's views that "the doctor works with more than medicine", a view which Kotnis wholeheartedly supported. On many occasions he said to his

colleagues in the hospital, "When a patient needs mental consolation and encouragement, a doctor or nurse should do everything possible to satisfy him even if it involves a personal health hazard."

This was not wrong in itself. As a conscientious and serious man, Dr. Kohn felt that it was indeed necessary at all cost to offer mental consolation and encouragement to a patient, but it was also an error to over-emphasize this point to the extent that the priority of work in the hospital was ignored. After he acquired the name "Black Mother", he reflected on this matter even more frequently.

Case after case of death, permanent disablement and complication made him realize the error more keenly. On those occasions, the Kohn famous for his good humour sometimes turned irascible.

Once a wounded soldier with his right arm blown off was sent to the hospital from the front. Kohn and several other experienced doctors all hurried to the operating room. The case was not one of simple bone fracture for the patient's blood vessels and nerves had also been severed by the explosion. His right arm was attached to his body by only a piece of skin. The rejoining of severed limbs was as yet out of the question. They could do nothing but remove the broken limb. When the patient had been taken away, Kohn took the amputated limb in his hand and said gravely, "We've failed to do him justice. He can no longer go back to the front."

A doctor at his side tried to console him and said, "Don't be upset. There was no alternative and such cases have always been handled like that."

To everybody's surprise, Kohn shouted, "What? So they've always been handled like that? That's an out-moded view. Are we going to regard the record of our

past failures as our Bible? Why hasn't all this death and disablement been able to awake us? Because it's easier to shift the responsibility onto past practice, isn't it?"

When he noticed that the other doctor was completely at a loss in face of his outburst, he lowered his voice and explained painfully, "I wasn't complaining about you; I was condemning myself. Bethune told us that death and disablement were the enemies we had to eliminate. But we've lost too many battles in this war."

When he spoke at a meeting sponsored jointly by the medical school and the hospital in commemoration of the second anniversary of Bethune's death, Kotnis added the following paragraph to his draft speech: "Once, a tubercular patient on the verge of death asked Dr. Bethune to give him a kiss. He did as he was asked. But why? He did it as a kind of silent protest against the relations between man and man in capitalist society where the value of life is measured in money. But here, in our army and the Border Region, we regard man as the most precious treasure on earth. Therefore, what is expected from us is not only emotional consolation for the sick and wounded but skill, the skill to save our fighters and our people from death and disablement. Just as Bethune said at the opening ceremony of the Songyankou Model Hospital, 'The application of skill and the training of competent people are the means for winning the victory!'"

Kotnis always set an example in adhering to what he demanded of others. He chose gastroenterostomy — a common but rather difficult operation — as a breakthrough point. It was said that Bethune had performed the operation in the hospital, but unfortunately all those who had worked as his assistants then had been transferred to other places. Therefore, gastroenterostomy was something new

to the doctors in the hospital at the time. Kotnis had taken part in such an operation when he was an intern following his graduation from the medical college. But it had been done in a modern operating room with a ceramic tiled floor and walls and running water, an operating lamp and fine medical instruments. A professor in his fifties had been in charge of the operation while Kotnis had served only as an assistant in charge of the surgical forceps and hemostats. But here, the operating room was a peasant's ordinary mud house. There was neither running water nor any operating lamp. Many instruments were lacking and substitutes had to be used.

The difficulty was great but it had to be done. Because if such an operation wasn't performed on those seriously wounded in the abdomen, the prospect for them would be slow and certain death. But would the performance of the operation cause trouble? If the patient died in an unsuccessful operation, what would be the consequences? Kotnis was at first constantly tortured by such thoughts.

Just as he was feeling most worried, Jiang Yizhen invited him to his office and said, "This is like a battle. We can't demand a commander to win every battle. We only oppose rash commanders who don't have the necessary understanding of the enemy or of their own forces and don't care to make painstaking preparations. So long as you feel you have the resources, you should go ahead boldly."

Jiang Yizhen's words removed a heavy burden from his mind. But where were his "resources"?

They were to be found among the patients, among his comrades and in the experiences of others before him. These resources were hard to come by. In the days prior to the operation, the study of gastroenterostomy took up

nearly all his time and energy. It was on his mind at the time when he was eating, sleeping, walking or talking.

If the medical experiences of his predecessors could be likened to water, it might be said that Kotnis was like a piece of sponge. He absorbed the water of past experience to the utmost of his capacity and then turned it into one operation plan after another. After repeated examination and revision, the plan gradually improved. He was exceedingly strict with himself in this task. A strong sense of responsibility reminded him that he must be very cautious and careful and he bore firmly in mind one of Bethune's sayings: The patients receiving treatment "are all your brothers and sisters and they are indeed even closer to you than your brothers and sisters, because they are your comrades".

It was obvious to see from Kotnis' drawn face that he had paid a high price to master gastroenterostomy. On the eve of the operation, he couldn't remain calm. That evening he didn't stay at his desk as usual to study medical literature or the operation plan. Instead, he went for a walk around the village by himself.

Suddenly, he heard the sound of footsteps behind him and a shadow approached him.

"Who is it?" he asked.

"Me."

"Oh, Principal Jiang Yizhen. Why are you out so late?" He went over and shook hands with Jiang Yizhen.

Jiang Yizhen patted him on the shoulder and said with a sigh, "Like you, I want to take a walk and get some fresh air."

The two of them walked silently along the field path for a long distance. Then, Jiang Yizhen stopped and said,

"I'd like to be your assistant at the operation tomorrow, if you have no objection."

"My assistant!" cried Kotnis in astonishment. Jiang Yizhen nodded and Kotnis was overjoyed. "But that's wonderful! How kind of you! I know you were the head of an operating team praised by Dr. Bethune."

Jiang Yizhen smiled and his white teeth gleamed in the dark. "Precisely because of that, I should be your assistant." Then he added in a kindly voice, "Well, let's both get some sleep."

Kotnis gladly agreed.

He had an exceedingly sound sleep that night. And the next morning, he came to the operating room full of energy. The patient was already lying unconscious under anaesthesia. Jiang Yizhen nodded to him confidently. Kotnis took up the scalpel and nimbly cut down along the middle of the abdomen. He forgot all about the people looking on around him and the various thoughts he had had. He saw only the objects of the operation — the stomach and the intestines.

Thanks to the operation plan which had been perfected with many good suggestions from other comrades, the operation was a complete success. Not the slightest complication arose. As soon as he took off his mask, Kotnis shook hands firmly with Jiang Yizhen.

After that, he did a second, third and many more gastroenterostomies. All were successful. Abdominal trauma was a complication that posed a new challenge to him, but he succeeded in performing operations on trauma complications in the intestines too. Dozens of patients were saved from death and Kotnis became a leading surgeon in the border region.

After the first patient who underwent gastroenterostomy

had fully recovered, Kotnis gave a special lecture entitled "Technical Problems in Gastroenterostomy" to the students of the Bethune Medical School. And he concluded his lecture with the following words:

"Bethune was quite right in saying that a doctor works with more than medicine. But after investigating his medical practice in its entirety, we must add that a doctor cannot rely solely on a good heart. There seems to be a contradiction between the two statements, but if you think seriously, you will find that they are united, united on the premise of doing everything for the health of the people. If Bethune were alive, he would certainly approve of this addition of ours. His actions clearly indicate that."

In a letter addressed to Basu dated January 4, 1942 Kotnis gave a short review of his medical work since he became director of the hospital:

By virtue of my being the head of the hospital, I had to take part in the executive work, which, in addition to my looking after the surgical beds, keeps me pretty busy. My medical work consists of looking after the surgical patients, performing operations and helping students in practical study in the operation theatre. We do on average two operations a day, and consequently the transit of patients in the hospital is pretty great. During the whole year, we did about 430 surgical operations which included 45 amputations, 20 hernias, 3 lumbar and presabral parasympathectomies, 3 intestinal anastomoses and a few gynaecological operations. This in short is the work I am doing here.

He did not mention the conditions under which these operations were performed. There was no well-equipped operating room at their disposal so that operations were

usually done in the common mud houses of the peasants; dressings and drugs were in such short supply that pledget and gauze had to be washed over and over again for re-use until they lost their original form and the fibres became short and thin; and, as they had no autoclave sterilizers or boiling sterilizers, the dressings and instruments were boiled and steamed in household cookers. In order to be sure of the standard of disinfection, Kotnis had to check it every day. It was under such conditions that he and his comrades performed more than 450 operations.

Kotnis was never satisfied with himself. He told Basu that although he had improved his surgical skills considerably, he did not think he had made much progress in medical science research.

Years later, Danial Latifi, General Secretary of the All-India Dr. Dwarkanath S. Kotnis Memorial Committee, commented on that as follows:

Dr. Kotnis was too modest when he said that he had not made much progress in medical science. Science advances as a result of the interaction between theory and practice. The special conditions under which Kotnis worked undoubtedly led him to apply medical science and theory creatively. This was probably a point he did not quite fully appreciate at first.

This comment was not far from the truth. Soon after his letter of January 4 to Basu, Kotnis began the writing of *Surgery*, a textbook specially compiled for the use of the Bethune Medical School. Kotnis often under-estimated his own achievements and sometimes deliberately kept silent about them, but those who had worked with him were unanimous in their high assessment of him.

A British professor who had visited Kotnis had this to say about the hospital under his direction:

The ingenuity in making the fullest use of improvised equipment at this hospital was surprising to us. The beds were mainly used doors taken from uninhabited peasant houses and were supported on clay bricks at both ends with dry straw serving as mattresses. Pills and powders were stored in canvas bags hung on the walls. The medicine bottles were kept in specially made collapsible boxes that could be transported on the back of a mule. All the medical instruments were kept in boxes when they were not in use. In case of an alarm the whole hospital could finish its packing and be ready to move within half an hour.

The collapsible boxes mentioned here were in fact an invention of Bethune's which he called "Lugouqiao". Maintaining the spirit and improving on the experiences of Bethune, Kotnis devoted himself to the cause of attending to the sick and wounded and raising the medical standards of the border region. In the process, he worked energetically on bold experiments in surgical techniques and medical science and his achievements were praiseworthy.

Chapter IV

Hard Times

I

The year 1941 witnessed the greatest difficulties ever faced by the people in the anti-Japanese war conducted under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party.

During the war, the Kuomintang authorities adopted a policy of passive resistance to Japan and actively intensifying their suppression of the people. Late in 1940 they made the preposterous demand that the Communist-led New Fourth Army operating in southern Anhui Province be shifted to the north. In the interest of unity for armed resistance, the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party agreed to shift the troops in southern Anhui to the north bank of the Changjiang (Yangtse) River. In early January 1941, when 9,000 officers and men of the New Fourth Army were marching north, they were ambushed by 80,000 Kuomintang troops. The subsequent battle lasted seven days, and in the end only 1,000 men were able to break through the encirclement. Commander Ye Ting was badly wounded and captured; most of the officers and men died heroically in the battle. This event,

which shocked China and the world, became known as the Southern Anhui Incident and was the climax of the second anti-Communist onslaught unleashed by the Kuomintang reactionaries during the war.

This was what Japan had hoped for. While the Kuomintang reactionaries mounted a large-scale offensive against the Communists and the Communist-led anti-Japanese base areas, the Japanese aggressors mustered 60 per cent of their forces in North China to carry out the unprecedentedly brutal policy of "burn all, kill all, loot all" in the liberated and enemy-occupied areas there, thus putting into effect their statement that Japan would no longer fight against the Kuomintang's National Government and would concentrate its efforts on fighting against the Communists instead. In August, Yasuji Okamura, Commander of Japan's North China Front Army, led 100,000 troops in conducting an extensive "mopping up" campaign in the Beiyue area of the Shanxi-Qahar Hebei Border Region by employing the tactic of attacking from several routes and closing in in depth to effect an encirclement as impregnable as a bastion of iron. Within two months, they had killed over 4,500 people, burned down more than 150,000 homes, and looted over 30,000 tons of grain and 10,000 head of livestock. Seventeen thousand people were sent to the Northeast as forced labour and over 600 Party members and cadres were arrested or killed.

The enemy would not even leave Norman Bethune's tomb intact. On October 15, the last day of the sanguinary "mopping up", a group of Japanese invaders came to the southern part of Juncheng, Tangxian County, where Bethune was buried. They smashed to pieces both the mausoleum and the stone tablet in front of Bethune's grave.

bearing an inscription of a memorial article by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party. But they did not stop there. For the whole afternoon, these fascists turned the place into a shooting range and the Martyrs' Tower near Bethune's grave into a target, finally blasting the place to pieces. This beautiful martyrs' park where Bethune and 25,000 other Chinese comrades had rested in peace was completely demolished. Only the white marble statue of Bethune remained, hidden by a few peasants at the risk of their lives before the enemy arrived.

The army and people in the border region and also Dr. Kotnis were being tested by the unprecedented ruthlessness.

One day after the Southern Anhui Incident in January 1941, Basu wrote in his diary:

... I met Chairman Mao again to report our joint decision. I exchanged several wireless messages with Kotnis. He agreed to stay and work in the Bethune Medical School and International Peace Hospital at the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Border Region. He also approved the idea of my staying at Yan'an and working in the surgical departments of the Health Department of the Eighth Route Army. The treacherous New Fourth Army Incident had just been provoked by the KMT. The whole nation was enraged and gloomy. The bitter days were ahead. Both Kotnis and myself decided to face boldly the situation alongside our comrades of the Eighth Route Army and the Chinese Communist Party.

The Third Military Sub-Region of the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Border Region held a meeting of the army and the people in Zhang Ge Zhuang near Ge Gong Village. It was a meeting to express personal determination, and

Kotnis delivered a long speech in Chinese. He said: "Now our anti-Japanese war has reached another stage and a lot of changes have taken place both at home and abroad. Our border regions have shrunk, our army has been reduced and our struggle has become more difficult, but can this scare us? No, absolutely not! The enemy's policies of 'mopping up', 'nibbling away' our territory, 'burning all, killing all and looting all', and the ridiculous policy of 'political recantation' cannot shake our determination. We pledge to fight shoulder to shoulder with you until fascism is defeated!" Then, full of indignation, he sang his favourite song together with the 5,000 armymen and people present:

Arise!

All you who don't want to be slaves,

With our flesh and blood

Let's build a new Great Wall.

The most dangerous time has come!

Everyone must shout, with his loudest voice,

Arise!

Arise!

Millions as one

We are ready to face the fire of the enemy guns!

.....

That evening, he asked a comrade to translate the song into English, which he copied down in his notebook.

Night. A crescent moon hung in the sky which twinkled with myriads of cold stars. In the dense forest, a vigorous young man was marching at a rapid pace. It was Kotnis. In face of the frequent "moppings-up", he and the other comrades had reluctantly left the hospital and

the medical school they had built with their own hands. They carried their blanket rolls with them and moved into the hills and forests. The wounded were removed from the hospital and concealed before the enemy's "mopping-up". The leading comrades asked Kotnis to shift with the comrades of the school, as Jiang Yizhen, the principal of the Bethune Medical School, was experienced in guerrilla warfare and the military region often sent troops to escort them. So Kotnis as well as the teachers of the North China Associated University and the members of the Administrative Council of the Border Region often shifted together with the school.

Just at this time three batches of military surgeons were to graduate and so both teachers and students were extremely busy. How could they go on with their teaching and study when there were continuous "mopping-up" and "anti-mopping-up" campaigns and they had to march and fight day in and day out?

The teachers and students not only learned to preserve themselves, but also to create the conditions to allow themselves to grow in strength. Holding "class-in-arms" was one of their major inventions. Their watchword was "Study and Fight".

While marching, the students discussed the lessons they had learned. Review questions were written on roadside stones by comrades sent out in advance who were to call upon the others to answer as they marched past. Naturally everyone would join and think the questions over. They discussed the questions which they failed to understand or answer. Some students wrote down the contents to be memorized on a sheet of paper which they attached to the bag carried on the back of the comrade in front of them, reciting while they marched. By the time they reached

their destination, they already had learned most of the material by heart. At camp or during long rests, things were easily managed. During one or two hour rests, they sent one or two students to stand sentry on the hilltops together with the militiamen while the other students held a class in the forest or ravine, which was difficult for the enemy to scout. If the students standing sentry spotted signs of enemy movement, they waved towels, and all the students immediately packed up and moved. If they had half a day at camp, they could do an academic experiment. If they could buy two dogs by chance, they could hold a lesson in surgery using scissors and razors as operating instruments.

Education in this way was no easy matter. It would not be excessive to say that their hearts' blood went into their work and study. In order to do a good job of holding "classes-in-arms", the teachers had to use the intervals between marching and fighting to prepare their lessons. Kotnis, being the director and the teacher of surgery, was even busier.

This was mainly because of the language barrier. Generally speaking, he had no problem delivering lectures in Chinese, but it was difficult for him to write in the language. He never used the blackboard except to draw pictures. He wrote his teaching material in English and then he himself or other teachers translated it into Chinese. But this method couldn't be used during the "anti-mopping-up" campaigns. The intense fighting gave him no time either to translate or print his material. All he could do was give lectures and let the students take notes. Chinese characters with their many strokes brought Kotnis much trouble.

He set himself a new task and launched an "offensive" upon the writing of Chinese characters.

The new battle began and he charged triumphantly into it. The evening before he had to deliver a lesson, he spent capturing the large and small strongholds made of Chinese characters. Though there was no glint of cold steel or flash of heavy fire, this battle to learn to write Chinese characters was the same as a real one in point of arduousness. It can even be said that Kotnis had been wounded in it.

Once when they had arrived at their new quarters after a long march, a scout told them that the enemy could not reach them within a day, so they planned to hold a class in the afternoon. It was 7:00 a.m. They ate something, unpacked and went to sleep. Kotnis immediately found a quiet place and began preparing his teaching materials. He planned to take a nap after lunch to refresh himself. Unexpectedly, before lunch, the scout reported again that the enemy was moving in their direction and reconnoitring. The comrades repacked and headed for the hills at once. Kotnis was so sleepy that before he knew where he was, he was sliding into a ravine. Fortunately the bodyguard grabbed him in time and pulled him up, with only a few scrapes on his hands and knees.

The most dangerous incident was when they accidentally ran into the enemy. Once, shortly after they settled down in a village, they suddenly found themselves encircled by a group of the enemy. As there was only one platoon of guards with them, it would not have done to fight. The only way out for them was to break through the encirclement as quickly as possible. In no time the fighters of the guards platoon made a breach in the enemy's encirclement, from where the girl students and

the old, weak, sick and disabled made off in the direction of the Headquarters of the Third Military Sub-Region. Jiang Yizhen urged Kotnis to leave with these people, which led to a heated argument between the two.

"It's wrong to ask me to go," said Kotnis. "As director I should be the first to assault the enemy and the last to retreat." Hardly had they finished arguing than the enemy blocked the breach. The enemy was closing in on them and they were in a very critical situation. Fortunately, a regiment of the Third Military Sub-Region rushed to their aid. They broke through the encirclement, but the enemy would not give up. When they reached the village of Daitai, the enemy's planes caught up with them and many were killed in the bombing. Kotnis and the other comrades, carrying the wounded, were forced to shift down the hill. At the foot of the hill, where they buried the dead, they made use of the hours before shifting again to hold a class. The lecture he gave this time was not to be found in their textbooks, that is, he spoke on how to use substitute instruments in emergency treatment of the wounded.

This teaching and studying contingent went in and out of Tangxian, Quyang, Guangling and Fuping counties and fought the enemy for over a month. Life was very hard; they were always either being pursued or bombed by the enemy. They were constantly short of food and sometimes had only one meal a day. They marched day and night and seldom stayed in one place for several days at a time. Nevertheless, they finished their major courses. In February 1941, after an intense and rigorous examination, the three batches of military surgeons graduated in Lian Zhuang Village. Having studied and graduated in the midst of fighting, the students were in a turmoil of feel-

ings when they were going to be parted from each other and their teachers. They knew very well that it was at the risk of their own lives that the teachers had passed on their knowledge to them. Before graduation, they gave souvenirs to their teachers to whom they were very attached. Everyone asked the teachers to inscribe messages for them. When Kotnis was asked to do this, he thought for a while and then carefully and neatly wrote the following words in Chinese:

The War of Resistance Is Bound to Triumph.

"This is my wish for the Chinese people and also my unchangeable belief," he said earnestly and firmly, holding the comrade's hand.

2

At sunset, two sturdy steeds galloped eastward from Fuping County in a cloud of dust. The men on horseback seemed to be dissatisfied with their speed, for they flourished their whips to urge the horses on, and the valley reverberated with the harmonious and beautiful echo of hoofbeats.

The riders were Kotnis and his bodyguard, a childlike little Eighth Route Armyman. Kotnis had left Ge Gong Village for the military region to attend an urgent meeting. Before the meeting ended, the enemy had begun their autumn "mopping-up", so Kotnis had to rush back to the hospital.

It did not take long before they had covered a distance of several dozen li. Qingxu Mountain came into view after they had forded the Yaozi River, climbed over Siling

Mountain and up Xiaojian Ridge. And Ge Gong Village and the hospital were just beyond Qingxu Mountain. Kotnis spurred on his horse and it ran at a full gallop.

A few miles later, his bodyguard suddenly called out "Director, stop!"

Kotnis at once reined in his horse which reared neighing loudly.

The bodyguard pointed in front of them and said "Look!"

Kotnis saw a thick column of smoke rising from the foothill. The autumn wind carried to them the smell of burning and the faint sound of screaming. It was clear that the enemy had already started its "mopping-up".

The burning village filled them with anxiety and indignation. While the village of Niangzishen at the southwest foot of Qingxu Mountain was still quiet, the enemy would soon be there. It was the only way to Ge Gong Village, so there was no time for hesitation. Looking at each other, they whipped their horses and sped towards it.

Niangzishen Village, a few kilometres to the east of a small river they had forded, was very quiet except for the occasional barking of a dog or crowing of a rooster. They observed the village from the outskirts for a while and then went cautiously onto its main road. Not a single villager was in sight. Obviously, all the villagers had been evacuated.

"Quick!" they both said almost at the same time and got on their horses at once.

They were just going to apply their whips when Kotnis suddenly got off as if he had discovered something peculiar. He stood against a wall, listening carefully.

"What's the matter?" asked his bodyguard in surprise as he also got off his horse.

"Listen. Someone's groaning." Kotnis beckoned to his bodyguard. "Come here. Listen."

The bodyguard listened carefully near the wall and heard the groan. It seemed as if a woman was crying in pain. Seeing that Kotnis didn't move, the bodyguard said with some awkwardness, "Who on earth is still here!"

Kotnis handed him the reins and said, "Tie the horses to the tree. We'll go in and see what's happening."

His bodyguard was unhappy and said, "Why? The enemy will be here any minute."

"That's enough. Hurry up," ordered Kotnis sternly.

It was the first time that the bodyguard had ever had an order from Kotnis. Unhappy as he was, he had to obey. When the horses were tied, they went into the yard whence the groan had issued. Following the sound, they came to the room facing south.

Kotnis rushed in and saw a pregnant woman tossing on the bed in pain. Her face was pale and the pillow was wet with her sweat.

"Sister!" Kotnis called in a low voice. "What's wrong with you?"

The woman was taken aback by the sudden call and stammered, "Who . . . who are you?"

"He is Director Kotnis of our International Peace Hospital," replied the bodyguard stepping forward.

"Yes, I'm Dr. Kotnis. Are you about to give birth?"

"Director Kotnis!" cried the woman in happy astonishment with tears running down her cheeks. She had heard of Kotnis because Niangzishen Village was only about thirty li away from Ge Gong Village. Without more ado.

she began to tell him what had happened. This morning when the villagers were preparing to move to the mountains, they tried to persuade her to go with them. She disagreed, for she considered herself a burden to them. Moreover, she thought that since the end of her pregnancy was drawing near it would be safer to stay rather than to move. She had not expected to give birth right away.

"Where's your husband?" asked the bodyguard.

"He didn't know what to do, so he's gone to the mountains to look for help."

"Oh no!" said the bodyguard, stamping his foot. He didn't know anything about medical science, but he did know that giving birth was a very troublesome matter. He paced up and down the room and suddenly asked the woman, "Is there some kind of burrow anywhere in your home?"

"There's a very small one over there," she said, pointing to a corner of the room.

"That's good!" he said. He drew Kotnis aside and whispered, "Director, there's no time to lose. Shall I first hide her in the burrow, then escort you back to the hospital and come back with a doctor to pick her up?"

Kotnis shook his head and said, "There isn't enough time, I'm afraid."

"Then what can we do? We can't practise midwifery here!"

"No, that's true." Kotnis agreed. He went out, opened the door facing the road and looked out onto the trail leading to the mountain. It was very quiet, not a soul on the trail. After a moment's thought, he said to the bodyguard, "Go up the mountain and get some guerrillas to help us carry her away."

"Carry her away?" The bodyguard was astonished. "The enemy will be here soon. How can we carry her away under such circumstances?"

The little fellow was quite stubborn sometimes. It was apparent that he would need more talking to before he could straighten out his thinking.

Though Kotnis was anxious, he said to him in a calm tone, "Little fellow, have you forgotten the story I told you about Dr. Bethune?"

"No."

"Good." Kotnis put one hand on his shoulder and asked, "What would Dr. Bethune do if he was confronted with the same problem?"

The bodyguard reflected and hung his head in silence. He had often heard Kotnis repeat this question, so he knew very well that no matter how tired Kotnis was and no matter how perilous his position, once he said this, there would be no changing his mind.

Time was pressing; they couldn't afford to debate any more. "I see your point, Director Kotnis," said the bodyguard. "But it would be better for you to go up the mountain and look for the guerrillas. It's very dangerous to stay here. If nothing happens, come and pick her up and if the enemy comes, I'll protect her at all costs."

"What a little scamp!" Kotnis was moved by the little fellow's sincerity and simplicity. Holding his hand, Kotnis said with deep affection, "I appreciate what you've said, but you're the right person to look for the guerrillas. You are a native here and are familiar with this area. Moreover, if something happens to her, I can cope with it. As regards the danger, it is equally dangerous to go up

the mountain or stay here. Get on the horse and come back as quickly as possible."

The little guard rode away without a word.

Kotnis again entered the room. The woman had fallen asleep for she was exhausted from the pain. Kotnis quietly gathered some firewood to heat some water in case of any eventuality. The water boiled, he lifted a door off its hinges and, with some ropes, made it into a stretcher.

It was uncommonly quiet. The air was stifling and there wasn't a breath of wind. Kotnis could no longer hear even the barking of a dog or crowing of a cock. The only sound was that of his horse, clattering as it moved back and forth. The silence was the hardest thing to bear.

Half an hour passed and still not a single person appeared on the trail. The pregnant woman was still in a peaceful, sound sleep, snoring lightly.

He was familiar with this type of complexion. His landlady, who looked more experienced and mature than this woman, was very thoughtful of others. Knowing that he had come from a subtropical land, she heated his brick bed everyday to make him comfortable. Another woman, about the same age as the pregnant woman, was head of a women's national salvation association and was very bold and resolute. Once when they were crossing a river, a pack containing medical instruments dropped into the water. She was the first to jump in after it, beckoning with her arm and shouting to others to follow. A dozen young men and women followed after her. It was early spring and the water was still cold, but they fished out all the medical instruments. Kotnis also knew many capable voluntary nurses. Even when the river was frozen, they would break the ice to wash the pus-and-blood-covered

bandages for the wounded soldiers. They never complained of their frostbitten hands. He was familiar with these ordinary women of the countryside and with their thoughts and feelings. Now, he felt that they were beside him, looking at him with encouragement and ready to help.

Hearing the sound of footsteps, Kotnis opened his eyes wide. Was it the bodyguard? Yes, it was! He was followed by six or seven robust militiamen. They had come at last!

The woman's husband, a middle-aged man, strode forward and shook Kotnis' hand without knowing what to say.

"Comrades, let's carry her to our hospital!"

Acting on Kotnis' order, the young men lifted the stretcher and started towards the back mountain.

Just as they rounded a hillock, they heard a shot from behind and saw dark smoke rising. The enemy had begun to burn Niangzishen Village. Full of indignation, they quickened their steps.

Kotnis delivered the baby in a make-shift operating room. It was a lovely girl. People inside and outside the operating room beamed when they heard the baby's first cry.

"This is a flower of friendship between the army and the people!" remarked one of them.

"A flower of friendship between China and India!" said another.

"Flower! Flower!" everybody chimed in happily. Two dimples appeared on the baby's cheeks. She was smiling as if she had heard the remarks of her elders.

The baby's parents, Kotnis, and those in the room laughed.

The autumn rain fell heavier and heavier and the going became more and more difficult because of the muddy mountain path and the brambles on both sides of the path. It was so dark that it was impossible to see one's own hand. Torches couldn't be used, so they had to grope their way forward.

They were halfway up a mountain named Camel Saddle, northwest of Fuping County. It was so named because there were two peaks very close to each other, which looked like the humps of a camel. A small detachment was now marching slowly between these two humps. They were carrying a stretcher on which was piled a raincoat, a military uniform, a shirt and a green sweater to keep out the rain and cold. Those who were familiar with Kotnis knew that the sweater had been given to him by Guo Qinglan.

The rain kept running down Kotnis' hair and his drenched clothes stuck to his body. He had a fit of dizziness and fell down. The detachment stopped at once. The intern hurried forward, felt his chest, put his ear to Kotnis' face and listened. "He's probably suffering from hypoglycemia caused by extreme hunger," said the intern with a sigh.

He fed Kotnis some water from a canteen and then took several dates out of his bag. Before long, Kotnis opened his eyes and took a deep breath. Seeing the dates, he weakly made a gesture with his hand and declined the offer, saying, "There aren't many left. Save them for the hardest time."

The intern was a student of the Bethune Medical

School, and so he knew Kotnis quite well. He knew that under the circumstances, it would be difficult to persuade him to have anything more than the others. Moreover, there was indeed not much left to eat. So, he didn't insist but put the dates back in his bag.

Kotnis was transferred to this small detachment from the school four days ago. The wounded man on the stretcher was a comrade in charge of an administrative office of the military region. When the office shifted to Lei Bao Village, Fuping County, an enemy bomb exploded near him and a fragment entered his lung through the shoulder. He breathed with difficulty and coughed blood and his cecum kept bleeding. The army was preparing to move again, and in order to ensure this comrade's medical treatment, Commander Nie Rongzhen had instructed that Kotnis be transferred from the school and lead the intern and other medical personnel in moving separately. Yesterday, they had been detected and pursued by the enemy. They didn't succeed in shaking off their pursuers until midnight.

The rain stopped, the dark clouds lifted and a pale light shone down on the earth again. Having found the comrades around him, Kotnis frowned, struggled to his feet and went over to the wounded man. He felt the man's forehead and found that his fever was higher than before. He drew back his hand.

"Director Kotnis," said the wounded comrade with an effort, "don't worry about me. I can stand it. You should take more care of yourself! Commander Nie told us to..." Kotnis motioned to him to stop speaking and directed the comrades to continue the march.

Rounding a spur, they marched northwest of the Camel Saddle, where there were high mountains and thick

forests. This was the place of concealment designated by the leading comrades of the military region before they had started out.

Kotnis felt dizzy all the way. He felt that there was a dim shadow before him, now appearing, now disappearing. His head was as heavy as if it were filled with lead and each step forward required a herculean effort. The ground under his feet felt as if it had turned to cotton, making it impossible for him to stand firmly on it. But what was most unbearable was the fire in his chest which left him painfully thirsty. He moistened his dry and cracked lips with his tongue.

This was the inevitable result of going without salt for a long time. Over the past year, they had seldom been able to get enough salt and it had become even more difficult since this autumn's "anti-mopping-up" had begun. The salt they had brought with them was soon used up in cooking and for washing wounds. For them, the sweetest thing in the world is water and the most delicious, salt. They even dreamed about salt. The day before yesterday, as Kotnis went round the sleeping soldiers at night to see that they were properly covered with quilts, and he came to a young soldier who suddenly shouted, "Director! We've got salt!" This wouldn't have been so bad if the others hadn't woken up. They all sat up in joyful expectation and looked at each other. Kotnis jerked his head at the sleeping soldier and they all realized that he had been dreaming! Perhaps he was eating salt in his dream. He was smiling, eating the salt with great enjoyment and slobbering, which made their mouths water.

As the consequences of this lack of salt began to be felt, their progress on the march grew slower and slower. Neither those who carried the stretcher nor those who

were walking behind ready to replace them uttered a word. They warned and helped each other only when climbing over rocks.

Step by step they marched forward. Daylight came and went, and after a whole day's march, they reached their destination.

With the help of a guerrilla unit leader, they settled down in a cave behind a village. The floor of the cave covered a space of about thirty square metres, and there was an opening at the back facing another ravine. Here the terrain was strategically ideal. The back opening was on a cliff and screened by a huge rock. It was the best place for hiding and rest.

Soon after they were out of danger, exhaustion overcame the soldiers. Having wolfed down a big bucket of salted porridge cooked with vegetables and sent by the militia unit leader, they curled up and went to sleep on soft straw strewn on the floor. Before long the rhythmical sound of snoring could be heard. Only Kotnis and the intern didn't go to sleep. They were straightening out the medical instruments and debating in low voices.

"There's no need for you to go. I can finish this task alone," said the intern.

"Why don't you let me go with you? We two can do the job more quickly, can't we?" said Kotnis.

The intern said with affection, "You're not in good shape. If you get worn out, the commander and the principal of the school will give me a dressing down."

Kotnis laughed and comforted him by saying, "No, they won't. Compared with the villagers here, my illness is nothing at all!"

He pointed to the small village which they could see from the opening at the back of the cave. The enemy had

left a terrible scene of destruction — collapsed houses, burned trees and broken furniture thrown into the street. This hamlet with less than ten households had suffered greatly.

The intern looked at it in silence. Kotnis carried the medical kit, gave the intern a push and said in a tone of command, "Let's get going."

Turpentine torches were lit in an empty room in the hamlet and the treatment began.

Patients were carried into the room one after another. The first one on the make-shift operating table was a little girl who had been stabbed twice in the belly; the second was an old man who had probably never dreamed that he would have his stiff legs broken in his old age; the third was a woman who had been stabbed after being raped, and the fourth was a young man.

All was quiet in the room. Kotnis swiftly cleaned and dressed the wounds and operated on the patients. Except to give brief instructions, he didn't utter a word. The atrocities pierced him to the heart, and when he raised his head, everybody could see that his teeth were clenched.

It took him from dusk until midnight to treat the nine wounded villagers.

When he got back to the cave and lay down on his bed of straw, he couldn't fall asleep. Each and every one of his joints ached as he had marched several days in a row and operated on the patients far into the night. How tired he was and how much he needed a rest! But rest wouldn't come.

Piercing the clouds, the moonlight lit up the cave. He could see pumpkins and corn stacked beside the opening, eggs in a basket and more than half a sack of millet standing against the wall. What was there in the bowl? Salt?

Yes! It was salt, more precious than gold. Evidently these things had been sent to them at dusk by the people of the households that had suffered.

Their situation grew worse because they had failed to get in touch with the administrative office of the military region and find the main force of the army nearby. They lacked grain, salt and firewood, not to mention edible oil. The enemy had made use of the direction of the wind to set fire to all the trees on the mountain. All that remained that was edible and useful the villagers had sent to Dr. Kotnis' detachment. But what could be left after the enemy's policy of "burning all, killing all, looting all"? Moreover, the mountain was still encircled by the enemy and it was impossible for them to go down and collect grain. They had to allay their hunger with the small amount of millet, black soya beans and wild fruits and herbs. Later, they were reduced to eating mainly boiled wild herbs seasoned with a thin layer of black soya bean or millet flour.

Nevertheless, Kotnis still tried to accomplish a lot.

After he had been operated on, the condition of the badly-wounded responsible comrade remained unstable for several days. Kotnis had to suit the remedy to his case, so he used the opportunity to teach the intern about observing changes in the condition of patients, the physiological and pathological mechanism of such changes, their treatment and even the position, method and degree of tightness appropriate to the application of adhesive tape in fixing the chest.

"You haven't graduated yet," he said to the intern. "The 'anti-mopping-up' campaign should not be allowed to interfere with your studies. You should continue your study 'in arms', as we did last spring." Naturally, this was

all that the intern could wish for, but he hadn't brought all his materials with him as he had left the hospital in such a hurry. Kotnis was in the same plight because he had been transferred to this detachment in the course of the moving. He had only an English-Chinese dictionary, a book of English-Chinese medical terms and another book on surgery, which had been snatched from Guo Qinglan's bag to lighten her load when they had begun to move. These books helped him a lot, but were useless for the intern. Therefore he had to compile teaching materials for immediate use.

He was very conscientious in his teaching though he had only one student. He prepared lessons and translated them into Chinese as he had done before. One night, the intern woke up and saw him still preparing lessons. He was moved and said, "Director, look at your face. It's black from the smoke of the turpentine lamp. Do have a rest. I'll make up my lessons later on." Putting a finger to his lips to warn the intern to speak in a low voice, Kotnis whispered, "You need study; so do I!"

When the condition of the responsible comrade had basically stabilized, Kotnis began to give more attention to the treatment of the local people. They regarded this special detachment as family members. Whenever someone sent for him or took a message to him saying, "Dr. Kotnis, a patient wants your help," he set out at once. Thus, it wasn't long before people within dozens of li knew that there was a doctor who was always ready to help.

One midnight a young peasant came from twenty li away and told Kotnis in panic that his wife was having a very difficult labour and was dying. Kotnis calmly and swiftly arranged the necessary instruments and started out

with the head nurse. They came back the next morning. He looked very pale when he dragged himself into the cave. The head nurse told the intern in a low voice that on their way back Kotnis had fallen from half way up the mountain down into a gully.

Kotnis lay on his straw mattress with his eyes closed tightly. When he opened his eyes and found the comrades watching him silently, he slowly sat up and his blanched lips parted in a grin. "She gave birth to a fat boy, a future Eighth Route Armyman..." he said.

Before he was able to finish speaking, he fell back on his mattress again.

He fell ill from over-exhaustion. One night, he felt dizzy, and when he was about to sit up to take some medicine, he suddenly lost consciousness. He fell down, grazing his head and elbows. He was having an epileptic fit.

The fit was brought on by fatigue, so the responsible comrade exercised his power of command by issuing two orders: one, Kotnis was to suspend home visits and let the intern replace him; two, he was to have meals with him, enjoying the same treatment for the wounded.

Kotnis refused to obey these orders. "A doctor must cure patients," he argued. "This is his duty. A doctor mustn't encroach upon the interests of the patients. This is a question of a doctor's moral character." Later, even though they got in touch with the health department and more doctors were available, he continued to pay home visits and sometimes went dozens of li to treat patients. Nothing could stop him as long as he knew there was work to do. Their living conditions improved, but he preferred to have his meals in the kitchen of the health

department rather than with the wounded comrade.

He stayed in Camel Saddle for nearly a month, not returning to Ge Gong Village, where the hospital was situated, until the end of the enemy's autumn "mopping-up" and the responsible comrade's complete recovery.

4

The people in the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Border Region went through untold hardships in the eight years of the War of Resistance, but 1942 was the hardest of all.

In early summer of that year, the enemy conducted a "May 1st General Mopping-up Campaign" on the central plains of Hebei Province. It was the most cruel "mopping-up" in the annals of the war. In autumn, the people had a poor harvest owing to the damage done by the enemy and floods. What was worse, the enemy carried out an economic blockade at a time when the new crop was still in the blade and the old one was almost consumed. The dried persimmons hidden from the enemy the previous year, the wild herbs, the bark and leaves of trees still remaining after the "mopping-up" were all consumed. Both the people and the troops were short of food. At first, they had sorghum cakes to go with wild garlic; later they were reduced to eating the feed for draught animals. After the cavalry regiment was dissolved, their staple food became the black soya beans normally fed to the horses. Each person was allotted 500 grammes a day. Soon they began to run short of black soya beans and could only have two meals a day of soup with some dried vegetables and a few black soya beans. As a result, those in good

health fell ill, while those with minor wounds weakened and the badly wounded died. Still, they continued to climb mountains, march and fight.

During this hardest of times, the army men and people in the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Border Region, following the example of those in Yan'an, conducted a campaign for production on a large scale.

One can imagine how difficult it was to persist in production for self-sufficiency when they were all suffering from hunger and cold and had to take part in frequent fighting. And a hospital is different from a combat unit. The latter can have intervals of rest, but never is a hospital without patients. It was extremely difficult to participate in the "anti-moppings-up", treat the patients and take part in the campaign for production all at the same time. People often fainted from hunger and fatigue during production activities. As Kotnis was their director and a foreign friend, the comrades took special care of him and tried to share his burden.

The transportation of grain constituted a great problem, since the enemy stepped up its blockade of the mountain area. The grain collected in the central plains of Hebei Province could only be sent to the foot of the mountain and then the various units stationed on the mountain had to dispatch people to carry the grain back. Once, a quota of grain was distributed to the school and placed in a village 20 li from Tangxian County. But the county seat was then in the hands of the Japanese and so it was dangerous to fetch the grain. Moreover, they had to walk more than eighty li to and from there, climbing trails over mountains and crossing rivers. As director, Kotnis had to be notified of the matter, so Jiang Yizhen came to the hospital and told him not to take part in the action. Kotnis

laughed and said, "O.K., but on condition that we both stay behind." Before they started out at dusk, Jiang Yizhen spotted him among the others. Knowing that he could do nothing about Kotnis, he pretended not to have seen him. They had no bags and so had to make use of available pairs of trousers tied in the legs. Those who were weak were only asked to carry one trouser leg of grain, because the mountain was high and the distance long. Everyone knew that Kotnis was ill, but he wouldn't accept the fact and insisted that both of his trouser legs be loaded with grain. Comrade Jiang Yizhen hurried forward to stop him, but he ran away with the grain as he hadn't heard him. Soon after they crossed the enemy's blockade line, he challenged an Austrian doctor to a race. The doctor had come to work in the hospital early in the year. He was very strong and a head taller than Kotnis. They got to the school at the same time, so they came out even. But their race served to liven up the grain-transportation team. The men and women comrades moved as if they were travelling on the wind.

Production was a major affair. It was impossible to persuade Kotnis not to take part in it, so the comrades tried to look after him in other ways. The Dean's Office had its own kitchen. In view of the fact that the teachers were intellectuals and older, they had better food in this kitchen. This meant that they had bean curd made from black beans while other comrades simply had bits of black bean. They were given a little more millet which in any case was the mildewed remnants of the stock. During the hardest times, the leaders of the school asked Kotnis to eat at this kitchen. But he declined the offer on the grounds that a director should live up to the principle of equality between officers and men. Once, something

special was prepared for the whole school. There was rice for the comrades of the Dean's Office and millet for the others. This was something rare. A leader, Kotnis' roommate, sent a messenger to get for Kotnis a bowl of rice from the special mess and a bowl of millet from the ordinary mess and put them in a box. Kotnis was so cross at this that he had a big quarrel with the leader. The following day, they criticized themselves and made up again. "I hope that I won't be treated as a foreigner," implored Kotnis sincerely. "I'd feel very unhappy to be separated from the rank and file at such a difficult time."

Another working day. The bugle for lunch sounded clearly and melodiously. The people who were reclaiming land from the Tanghe River hailed each other and headed back to the hospital in twos and threes, humming a song called *The Spring Scenery in February Is Beautiful*.

Entering the village, Kotnis first went to the mess for the wounded. They had millet and soup with dried vegetables for lunch, which was the best meal. He smiled with satisfaction and then went to the ordinary mess.

Food there wasn't bad. The old mess officer tried all possible ways of making better food in spite of the difficulties. They had beancurd made from black soya bean milk and wild herbs for lunch and, in addition, each person was allotted two corn-and-chaff buns because of the hard labour involved in reclaiming land. Kotnis was pleased with the old mess officer's job and patted him on the shoulder. But when he saw the bowl of chicken they had prepared for him, his colour changed.

It was preferential treatment again. The comrades were deeply concerned about him and had begun to give him more preferential treatment after his first attack of epilepsy. But how many ailing comrades had allowed

themselves to be hospitalized? Over the past two years malaria, enteritis and anaemia had threatened the health of many a comrade, but who had not stood fast at his post. For example, the laboratory technician whom he had just seen in the field. He had been suffering from malaria for the past ten days, but had concealed his illness from his comrades. Indeed, if he had taken a rest, who would have made the laboratory tests for the patients? And yet what he ate was. . . .

It was the same with the old mess officer. His story was known to all. He was a veteran armyman and had been injured twice in the counter-campaigns against the Kuomintang "encirclement and suppression" in Jiangxi Province. On the Long March, he had sustained an internal injury while rescuing a comrade and in the War of Resistance he was again wounded. There was still a shell fragment in his body. When the policy of "better troops and simpler administration" was put into effect, the Party organization decided that office work would suit him best but he wouldn't agree. Although he had been a cadre at the battalion level for a long time, he repeatedly asked to be sent to the school to work as a mess officer in charge of oil, salt, firewood, grain and such like. So here he was a mess officer. There was one pig left before they started moving in the "anti-mopping-up" struggle. The old mess officer was resolved to bring the pig along with him. Two months later, at the end of the struggle, he drove it back to the school. The pig hadn't lost any fat, but he himself had become thinner. When the comrades expressed their warm gratitude to him, he protested and said, "So long as I can share the difficulties of the Party, I'll be happy to bear the hardships."

This wasn't something unusual in the Eighth Route

Army, but who could forget about the old mess officer? Then Kotnis recalled his days in Wuhan. The comrades in the liaison office of the Eighth Route Army, from Zhou Enlai, Dong Biwu and Ye Jianying down to the soldiers, were content with their eight cent standard per meal. He couldn't tell why. Later when he met Zhou Enlai, the latter explained, "Because we have difficulties and all our comrades are aware of the difficulties." What strict demands they set on themselves when the revolutionary cause encounters difficulties! "Shouldn't I learn from them? And shouldn't I share weal and woe with them?" Kotnis thought.

He turned round and left with the bowl of chicken.

When he reached the open-air ground where they ate their meals, only seven or eight young fellows from the squad of nurses were there. They were puzzled when Kotnis put the bowl of chicken down in the middle.

"Director. . . ."

"Come on, let's all dive in and wipe it out together!"

"But. . . ."

Not one of them was ready to respond.

"You won't eat it? Well, that'll be all right if you can answer my question."

He told them to squat down and then asked, "What is the meaning of equality between officers and men?"

"Hmm. . . ." The young people felt a little awkward. Not that they couldn't answer this question, but they knew what the director was driving at.

Fixing his eyes on these fresh, young faces, he said with sincerity, "Comrades, how I wish I could lead exactly the same kind of life as you do. But, I cannot, because I am in poor health. Please take me at my word, I am willing to serve as an ordinary Eighth Route Armyman!" A

warm current coursed through their hearts. Director Kotnis always had others' well-being at heart, but never his own!

Kotnis was not from a poor family. If he had been in India, he would have been a resident physician or a college instructor and could have led a comfortable life, but he had chosen to throw in his lot with the Chinese people and undergo the severe test of war!

His heart was closely linked together with the hearts of the Chinese people; he never gave any thought to himself. Once, on the march, they were detected by enemy planes that dropped bombs on them wantonly. He was thrown off balance by a wave of hot air, but at once picked himself up and rushed to the wounded comrades, ignoring the bullets whistling past him, to carry out his duty of healing the wounded and rescuing the dying. During another move, they were caught in a thunderstorm and could find no place to take shelter. He promptly took off his straw hat to cover the wound of a soldier who had just been operated on, lest the wound should become infected.

Human beings have feelings. Everybody was deeply moved by Kotnis' noble internationalist spirit.

The young fellows "wiped out" the bowl of chicken. And looking at the empty bowl, Kotnis smiled with gratification.

That afternoon, Kotnis again joined the others in the vigorous production campaign. When some young men saw Guo Qinglan handing him a folded towel and motioning to him to put it under the pole on his shoulder, they nudged each other and laughed. Kotnis blushed and ran away with the baskets.

The sound of singing filled the air.

Step up production,
Work hard,
We can stand the hardest time.
Victory in the counter-offensive is in sight!

5

The hard life, heavy work and lack of rest over a long period of time brought on another attack of epilepsy caused by taeniasis.

Epilepsy is a kind of disease of the nervous system caused by long periods of over-excitement or repression. Those who suffer from the disease are liable to an attack in any place, at any time and lose consciousness all of a sudden. If one has an attack while on a high mountain, he may fall into an abyss and be smashed to pieces; if he has an attack by a river, he may fall into it and be drowned. Therefore, doctors have included it among the dangerous illnesses. Even if a patient has a light attack on level ground, he may bite his tongue, injure himself from a fall, and come to only after a couple of hours. If he has a bad fit, he will feel dizzy and restless and experience photism, phonism, and splitting headaches, which may last from several hours to several days. Although it will not endanger his life, it will take several days or even half a month for him to recover. After recovery, the patient aches all over. He feels that his bones are loose and he can't control his limbs. Continual fits will endanger his life.

As a doctor, Kotnis knew this very well, but he gave no thought to death, let alone to his own future. As long as there was breath in him, he would work for the rev-

olution. He knew the love his comrades cherished for him and he was unwilling to cause them grief. But how could he succeed in concealing it from them? The comrades had watched him closely ever since his first attack in June 1941. In the past year, the leaders of the military region, the school and the hospital had devoted a lot of care to him, sending for all doctors who were available to hold group consultations and buying all kinds of medicines.

In June 1942, however, he had another bad fit. He even bit through the towel put between his teeth by his comrades. Two hours later, he gradually recovered consciousness. Guo Qinglan wiped away the foam and blood at the corners of his mouth, put a wet towel on his forehead and brought him a cup of water after his breathing returned to normal.

He felt ill at ease to be taken care of and fed by others even by his wife. He insisted on her giving him a spoon but when the spoon was put in his hand, it fell to the ground. He was too weak to hold it.

Guo Qinglan picked it up and then helped him to sit up a little, saying, "Let me feed you!"

He submitted and drank the water. Seeing tears glistening in her eyes, he took her hand softly in his. He wanted to say a few words of comfort. Guo Qinglan, a very observant and sensitive woman, fully understood his intention. She was in good health and couldn't bear to hear words of comfort from her suffering husband. She helped him to lie down, covered him up and said with a smile, "Be quiet. You need a good rest. I'm going to the classroom to see whether the students have any questions about the lesson they learned today. I'll be back in a moment."

Without waiting for an answer from Kotnis or daring to take another look at him, she turned round and went out.

It was time to stop him from working so hard. The following morning, Jiang Yizhen came to see him and conveyed Commander Nie's three proposals for him to choose from: one, take a period of time off for convalescence in Yan'an; two, be hospitalized in a nearby city with the help of some underground Party organizations; and three, go to Hongkong or India for treatment.

A man does not easily shed tears. Kotnis, a strong-willed man, had never shed tears for his own sufferings from illness. But this time all sorts of feelings welled up and he couldn't control himself any more. He wanted to pour out his feelings to Comrade Jiang, but restrained himself. He looked at him with eyes brimming with tears and said instead, "Let me think it over."

With Jiang gone, only the husband and wife were left in the room. Guo Qinglan looked expectantly at him while wiping away the tears that had run down Kotnis' face.

Kotnis was in a contradictory mood. After considering the matter for a while, he said, "Of course, I should go and see the doctor. If I could be cured, so much the better. But as yet, there's no permanent cure for epilepsy. Moreover, the present situation. . . ." He raised his head and his eyes flashed with resolution. "This is a bridge-head!" he said.

Guo Qinglan was familiar with this metaphor. Since the outbreak of the Pacific War, he had often referred to the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Border Region as a bridgehead. By the end of 1941, people here could see through the Japanese imperialists' plot of "sustaining the war by means

of war" better than people in any other place. Two months earlier, when the Japanese aggressors made India their target of attack after occupying the Dutch East Indies and French Indo-China, he and Basu had discussed whether or not they should return to India to take part in the Resistance Movement. They arrived at the same conclusion that here was the place to fight for the world as well as for their motherland. Each battle in the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Border Region was a telling blow to the enemy's policy of "sustaining the war by means of war", particularly because the border region was a key area for the enemy's implementation of this policy. Guo Qinglan guessed what he meant when he mentioned the bridgehead, but she kept silent, waiting for him to elaborate.

Seeing this, Kotnis said in a tone of consultation, "Maybe I should stay here?"

It was both a question and an answer. In spite of herself, the tears began to run down Guo Qinglan's cheeks. "You're so stubborn," she said. "As a doctor, don't you know the consequences?"

This time, he kept silent. Then he asked her to get him the English edition of selections from works by Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin.

"Do you want to read?" she asked.

"No. Will you please read to me that passage on Antaeus told by Stalin?"

Antaeus, a famous hero in Greek mythology, was the son of the Earth and Sea (Gaea and Poseidon) and no one could match him in strength. The source of his strength came from his mother — the Earth — who gave him life and brought him up and whom he loved dearly. Whenever he encountered difficulties in wrestling with others, he derived fresh strength by touching the earth. But he had

a weak point, that is, he was afraid of being lifted up from the earth. His enemy, Heracles, turned this to advantage, raised him from the ground, and slew him. Stalin likened the Bolsheviks to Antaeus and he held that "so long as they keep close contact with their mother — the people — they will surely be invincible".

Guo Qinglan didn't get him the book, because she already knew the story by heart.

Kotnis gently stroked her hand and said, "Of course, I might die or be disabled, but the Indian people will be happy if I die for the liberation of the people of the world from the cruel oppression of fascism. You, I and our child to be born will also be happy, for I have dedicated all my life to the most glorious cause of mankind!"

Guo Qinglan had no more to say. Not because she knew that he wouldn't change his mind, but because she herself had taken the same oath under the banner of the Party.

Both husband and wife had reached a common understanding. Later, the commander, the political commissar and leaders at various levels all came to persuade him to leave for treatment. He politely refused and in the end he died at his post.

6

In the summer of 1942, a great rectification movement was started in Yan'an. It was a movement conducted within the Chinese Communist Party, and soon the comrades working in the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Military Region and the government of the border region began studying the documents relating to the movement.

Kotnis was not yet a Party member when the rectification movement began, but he was very enthusiastic about this movement. He paid close attention to this form of study and was filled with admiration for the Party. Only the Chinese Communist Party had the courage to open fire on itself and on such formidable enemies of the revolution as subjectivism, dogmatism and sectarianism. The Party members searched for their own shortcomings with their eyes wide open as they had searched for the enemy on the battlefield and showed no mercy in making self-criticism as they had shown no mercy at the front. These men of iron, tempered in the flame of struggle, had climbed high mountains, trekked across treacherous grasslands and escaped from the jaws of death and yet they wept when making self-criticism. They had recently performed meritorious deeds for the country and people and would win high praise in the near future. But they set greater store by the current movement and wouldn't allow themselves to depart from the right track.

Kotnis, who had not recovered from his serious illness, was attracted by the new battle. He didn't want to be an onlooker just because he was a foreigner. He was a revolutionary and, as such, he threw himself into the battle.

When he received the documents for the rectification movement he was so excited that he said to the political commissar, "How I wish I could grasp the entire meaning right away and engrave in my mind Mao Zedong's teachings on the revolution!" He yearned so strongly for revolutionary truth that he forgot all about his illness and the advice of the leaders, comrades and his wife. He studied the documents assiduously and sometimes even forgot to rest. No

wonder, for he had his own special experience in seeking truth over the years.

In the rectification movement, each of the Chinese cadres looked back into his own past and analysed his ideological development. While sitting at the group meetings listening to each one's life story and self-analysis, Kotnis was deeply impressed and could not help looking back on the path he had traversed.

In 1920, when he was ten years old, a large-scale anti-British movement swept over India. He saw how the colonial authorities used all kinds of savage means to put it down. This kindled the spark of revolt in Kotnis' heart. In 1929, when another anti-British upsurge set in, he became active among the students, doing propaganda and led strikes. He was not only concerned about the problems of his own country, but followed with increasing interest the development of the national liberation movements of other lands. Politics in India at the time was like the Ganges in flood, full of whirlpools. There were the non-cooperation movement, and radicals advocating violence; there were nationalists and Marxists; there were various schools of socialists and reformists. Kotnis was naturally sucked into these whirlpools, uncertain which was the best way to save his nation. As he said, "I was enlightened by the concept of revolution, but hadn't attained a correct understanding of how to make the revolution."

Then, there came a great surging tide. Japan unleashed a war of aggression against China in 1937, and the whole world rose against it. It was an irresistible tide, and he found himself fighting in the frontline. He was not forced into it. He "drifted with the tide" because he knew that the survival of the nation and the future of the world hinged upon the outcome of the war.

Now he could confidently write down these words: "Only after I joined the Eighth Route Army did I come to acquire a correct understanding of the revolution and class struggle." This was an extraordinary leap ideologically. To achieve this big leap, he availed himself of all chances in the struggles against the enemy's "mopping-up" campaigns to conduct a painstaking study of the guerrilla warfare. And his efforts bore fruit. The two letters he wrote between June and October 1942 to a friend in India show that he had already attained a correct understanding of the revolution and the way to make it.

He described the guerrilla warfare in his first letter as follows:

The Japs are supposed to have occupied the whole of North China, but what they really have occupied are only the big cities, railway lines and main roads. The remaining areas are still under Chinese control and occupied by the Eighth Route Army.... We launch surprise attacks on enemy stations, each time killing them in tens or twenties at the most. But this guerrilla fighting as it is called had its advantages. There is hardly any loss of life on our side, at the same time a large part of the enemy troops are engaged here because of us. It wears out the enemy while we increase our armaments by the cannons and machine-guns we capture. It does not let the enemy establish control and exploit the raw material in this region while we can keep up the people's confidence in their final victory.

The second letter was written under encirclement by the enemy. But he remained cool and collected and wrote the following:

We are here surrounded by the enemy troops, about 10 miles away in each direction. As the enemy launches surprise attacks on us, we are always prepared against such attacks — prepared to move at a moment's notice and hide our patients in the hills where the enemy dare not go. The war has gone on for five years now, but the Chinese are still holding on — and not only holding on but have full faith in their final victory.

These letters are not essays on guerrilla warfare, but from his brief description we can see that he already had a fairly deep understanding of it.

He also wrote thus to Basu:

I am glad of one thing: and that is, last year, there was a great change in my personal way of thinking and looking at the world. All those bad habits of mine — I have to a large extent discarded. Yes, there was a great change in myself which I myself as well as the others have observed.

Let me tell you, I'm not the Kotnis of two years ago.

Indeed he had changed greatly. In the past four years, he had won high honours. He had been met by Mao Zedong ten times, had been together with Zhou Enlai five times, and had talks with Zhu De and listened to his well-known speech on learning from Bethune. He was given such honourable names as "Black Mother" and "the Second Bethune". He was a comrade enjoying complete trust among the Eighth Route Army men and an expert in surgery held in esteem by the people. With this progress and honour, was it necessary for him to look back into his past?

But he never became complacent or stopped making further progress. The surgeon's scalpel is very sharp and

he was stern in “dissecting” himself ideologically. Although he had been in the Eighth Route Army for four years and acquired a correct viewpoint of revolution, he never underestimated the influence of his past experiences. He knew very well that this influence would be with him for a long time and even perhaps for the rest of his life. He criticized himself for committing the error of subjectivism. For instance, he criticized a comrade without prior investigation. He did not always pay adequate attention to the environment, so what he taught was sometimes divorced from reality and not entirely suited to the conditions of guerrilla warfare.

He didn’t try to hide his weaknesses for fear of treatment. In order to have everybody help him treat his ideological maladies, he read out his “case history” in public. He made public most of his study notes. One of his self-criticisms was entitled “An Examination of My Style of Study”, which reads as follows:

On the whole, my attitude towards study is correct, and I think I’m free from dogmatism. When I sum up the experiences gained, I do so under the guidance of theory. When I study a subject, I try to link it with reality, for example, the question of the united front. I try to put what I have learned into practice. I have done a lot in applying the principle that we should bear hardships and work hard during the stage of strategic stalemate which will last a long time and consequently entail many difficulties.

I try to match my deeds to my words, but sometimes I fail. For example, I ask the junior cadres to immerse themselves in the realities of work, but I myself haven’t done well in this respect. In my studies I used to set

much too high demands on myself; I have by and large corrected this shortcoming with the help of our Political Commissar Yu. In my political studies, I read quite a few books at the beginning and underlined many places in the books. Yet if I re-read those books now, I don't think I can understand even the marked places any more. It shows that I was not serious enough on reading the books and was content with a superficial understanding. I often study on my own, but I don't often attend group studies and hold discussions with others.

"For the benefit of our cause and of our work in future, we should sum up our experiences and draw lessons from them," he concluded. He was strict with himself in criticizing his own shortcomings. Even Party members of many years' standing were moved by his strictness and frankness.

"I'll cure patients anywhere I go." He had made such a pledge when he graduated from medical college, because he had witnessed people struggling for life on the verge of death. Now, he was making the same pledge, because he had the whole world in mind. He was eager to become a Party member, but he didn't know whether the Chinese Communist Party would admit him. He was well aware that he had many weak points and at the same time he was worried about his nationality.

After examining Kotnis' whole experience, the Party considered him to have met the requirements for a Party member.

He became a member of the Chinese Communist Party in July 1942.

Chapter V

Eternal Friendship

I

Joining the Party marks the beginning of a new life, a life which no longer belongs to oneself, because it is closely linked with the great cause of the people in their hundreds of millions, which fills it with dynamic power.

He plunged himself into his work with a new ardour. To meet teaching needs, he lost no time in compiling his *General Introduction to Surgery*.

It was very hot that summer with too much rainfall and too many mosquitoes. To keep the mosquitoes away, he wore a veil of gauze over his head. This was so stifling that sweat kept rolling down like rain. Nevertheless, under the dim light, he persevered in his writing. In this way he passed each and every night of that summer.

On August 23, Guo Qinglan gave birth to a boy who took very much after Kotnis with his dark face and deep-set eyes. How he loved his son! But, after kissing the baby on the forehead, he went right back to work. He wanted to celebrate the birth with his new book.

No force could check his enthusiasm and energy brought



about by this new life, not even another bad fit. He had an attack in September, and as soon as he recovered consciousness, he took up pen and paper and went on with his book. In November, he had yet another fit, but still wouldn't give way, though there was blood at the corners of his mouth. It seemed as if he felt some foreboding of evil, so he raced against time to complete his writing. He was determined to make the best use of the time left to him.

He finished his *General Introduction to Surgery* and then began on *Surgery in Detail*.

At 8:45 on the night of December 8, 1942, he had reached page 177. His pen ran very quickly over the paper, the characters appearing like rows of soldiers rushing into line. He had finally conquered the Chinese character. All of a sudden, he stopped and fell flat on his back, trailing a long horizontal stroke across the page. It was his fifth bad fit. Three minutes later, he opened his eyes to see Guo Qinglan holding an empty syringe. He smiled and held out his hand to her. She knew what he meant. With tears in her eyes, she helped him to the table, put the sheets of paper in order and handed him a pen. Like a commander on the eve of a decisive battle, Kotnis calmly deployed his troops by the thousands for action.

As the hour hand moved to ten, he had a fit again, the worst one yet, causing him to fall down on the ground. His coma and spasm lasted ten minutes. When he came to, he saw many familiar faces around him — the principal, the political commissar, doctors and nurses. He tried to sit up and express his gratitude to them, but he was so exhausted that his head dropped as soon as he had raised it. A weary smile played on his face and, gasping for breath, he struggled to say a few words. "Thank you, comrades for coming to see me. It's really nothing!" he

said. On hearing this, the principal and the comrades, who had come from the Red Army and seen many comrades die, couldn't help weeping. They knew as he did what these constant fits meant. He didn't want the comrades to worry about him. The struggle was arduous and time precious; and there was a lot of work waiting for them to do. He moved his hand and said, "Comrades, go — back — to — work. The wounded — are — waiting — for — you. . . ."

They didn't go. The principal took his hand and motioned to him to be quiet. Kotnis wanted to speak, but he was unable to. Only a trace of smile appeared at the corners of his mouth. . . .

At eleven, he had another fit. From 11:00 o'clock through to 6:15 the next morning, the fits came every ten or fifteen minutes, until finally he recovered no more. Morphine and camphor liquid were used and all other possible measures taken, but none could make the heart of this fine Communist beat again. This terrible illness had snatched away his precious life.

When he died, Kotnis was only thirty-two years old. He was in the prime of life and still had much waiting for him to do. He had recently written to Basu, asking him to go through the formalities of the passport for him so that he could work in China for two more years. In another letter, he wrote: "I want to go to Yan'an eagerly so as to sum up what I have learned in the Eighth Route Army." Now, instead of remaining in China for only two more years, he will remain forever, resting in peace in this country where he had worked and fought for five years. He could no longer go to Yan'an, nor meet Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and Zhu De and the Eighth Route

Armymen with whom he had worked. With deep feelings, he had parted from all of them forever.

He passed away so abruptly that he didn't even have time to say a few words to his wife and child. He left behind his unfinished manuscript, and his noble spirit of internationalism.

The pain on his face had disappeared, and the zeal of a youth had reappeared at the corners of his mouth and between his eyebrows. He seemed to be sleeping tranquilly, but would never wake up again.

Kotnis' son, Yin Hua (meaning India-China), just 109 days old, burst out crying, scratching the air with his little hands. The crying broke the atmosphere of grief. Lovely baby, you are too young yet to know the tremendous loss your father's death means to the people's cause, the strength and inspiration your father's name will be to the people, and the fact that your name, given by Commander Nie, will always be a reminder to the people that your father dedicated his young life to the friendship between India and China.

2

You fared from the shores of the warm Indian Ocean,
To brave the cold of North China.
You fought five autumns in China,
For the world of tomorrow.
Alas, at the end of a long night,
The fountain of your life ran dry.
Oh, Comrade Kotnis, our beloved,
Your image will always be with us,
And your memory will live forever in our hearts.

On December 18, 1942, on the eve of the general counter-offensive, people were singing this solemn and stirring elegy in front of the portrait of Kotnis, holding in their hands copies of his inscription, "The War of Resistance Is Bound to Triumph". The Chinese people, who were in the midst of a hard struggle against fascism, grieved for the loss of their faithful and close comrade-in-arms.

The Chinese Communist Party spoke highly of its fine member and good son of the Indian people.

On the morning of December 30, 1942, the people from various circles in Yan'an held a memorial ceremony in honour of Kotnis.

In the auditorium hung an elegy written by Mao Zedong:

"Dr. Kotnis, our Indian friend, came to China from afar to assist us in our War of Resistance. He worked for five years in Yan'an and North China, giving medical treatment to our wounded soldiers and died of illness owing to constant overwork. The army has lost a helping hand, the nation has lost a friend. Let us always bear in mind his internationalist spirit."

Zhu De attended the memorial ceremony, delivered a memorial speech and read the funeral oration. In addition, he published an important article entitled "In Memory of Doctor Kotnis". With profound feeling, he wrote:

Doctor Kotnis has laid down his life for the anti-fascist war and for the liberation of the Chinese and Indian nations. He will be buried on Chinese soil by the side of thousands of our martyrs and his spirit will always live in the hearts of the Chinese people. Our soldiers will take up his position and continue to fight

for the liberation of the Chinese and Indian peoples till the final victory.

Later, Zhu De wrote these words for Kotnis' tomb:

Brought up on the banks of the Ganges, you came to take part in our struggle in the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Border Region. An internationalist doctor, your radiance will illuminate our two great nations.

Zhou Enlai, who was away in Chongqing at the time, sent a message of sympathy to Kotnis' family on behalf of the Chinese Communist Party and the Eighth Route Army. The message reads in part:

Dr. Kotnis is a symbol of the friendship between the great Chinese and Indian nations and a shining example of the Indian people, who are taking an active part in our common struggles against Japanese militarism and world fascism. His name will live forever in the hearts of the two great nations to whom he dedicated his life.

On April 5, 1943 when Dr. Basu was going to return to India, Comrades Mao Zedong and Zhu De wrote a letter to the Indian National Congress, once again expressing their sorrow over the death of Kotnis. They said in their letter:

Now that final victory in the world-wide anti-fascist war is being striven for, we hope that the two great nations of India and China will be more closely united than ever before so as to fight alongside other anti-fascist countries to smash fascism and liberate all the peoples who are under the fascist yoke, and at the same time to liberate the Indian and Chinese nations and win independence for these two great nations.

Soong Ching Ling also sent a message of sympathy to Kotnis' family in Bombay.

Kotnis' mother, his two brothers and five sisters mourned him when they received the sad news of his death; so did his friends and the people of his motherland. With the passage of time, more and more people came to know about him, extol him, and cherish his memory. The All India Dr. Dwarkanath S. Kotnis Memorial Committee was established in Bombay, with his close comrade-in-arms Basu serving as president. People sang in praise of Kotnis' meritorious deeds and likened him to "a bridge of friendship between the Indian and Chinese peoples".

Spring followed winter and the years went by. An earthshaking change took place in the land where Kotnis was buried.

The Chinese people won the War of Resistance Against Japan, thus fulfilling the behest of Kotnis and the tens of thousands of martyrs.

The Chinese people had stood up and the People's Republic of China was founded, which was Kotnis' long-cherished wish. Now, the Chinese people have won a tremendous victory in socialist revolution and socialist construction and China has entered a new historical period. We will carry forward the revolutionary cause pioneered by our predecessors and forge ahead into the future.

We will never forget Dr. Kotnis' internationalist spirit. After nationwide liberation, the Chinese people began building a happy homeland on the debris of war, and moved Kotnis' tomb from Juncheng, Tangxian County, to the Martyr's Cemetery of the North China Military Region.

In 1957, Zhu De, wartime Commander-in-Chief and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of New China met the three doctors on the Indian Aid-China Medical Mission — Basu, Cholkar and Mukerji — and also Kotnis' elder brother, Mangesh S. Kotnis. Zhu De said, "The friendly feeling of the Indian people and the noble internationalist spirit of Comrade Kotnis will live in our memory forever."

In 1958, Ye Jianying led a goodwill military mission on a visit to India. He made a special trip to visit Dr. Kotnis' family. He held the hands of Kotnis' mother, who was nearly seventy, and said to her, "Your son dedicated his precious life to the friendship between the Chinese and Indian peoples and their emancipation. The two peoples will never forget him." The old mother was very excited and said, "India and China are brothers!"

In August of the same year when Guo Qinglan was preparing to go to India to visit Kotnis' relatives, Premier Zhou Enlai met her and Yin Hua in Zhongnanhai. He earnestly instructed her to carry out the behests of Kotnis and carry forward the spirit of proletarian internationalism. He also enjoined Yin Hua sincerely to follow his father's example and work for the friendship of the Chinese and Indian peoples.

December 9, 1976 was the 34th anniversary of Kotnis' death. On that very day, the D. S. Kotnis Memorial Hall in the Bethune International Peace Hospital, of which Kotnis had been the first director, was inaugurated. Basu, as Chairman of the All-India Dr. Dwarkanath S. Kotnis Memorial Committee, Kotnis' comrade-in-arms and an old friend of the Chinese people, and Kotnis' relatives came specially to attend the ceremony. Looking round

the big, well-lit exhibition hall, they kept saying, "You really do treasure friendship."

True, the Chinese people do treasure friendship forged in battle. They will never forget Dr. Kotnis' internationalist spirit.

Appendices

Letter from Mao Zedong and Zhu De to the Indian National Congress

April 5, 1943

Dear Sirs,

After the outbreak of China's War of Resistance Against Japan, your Congress sent a medical mission to China to join in our War of Resistance, a manifestation of great friendship for China. The five members of the mission have all worked with the Eighth Route Army. In the past four years, they have not flinched from hardship and danger when moving around the battlefields of North China. Their arduous efforts and extremely valuable work have enabled countless Chinese soldiers and civilians to see with their own eyes the enthusiasm with which the Indian people support China. While three of the five members of the mission have already returned to India, Dr. Kotnis has died of illness in the Shanxi-Qahar-Hebei Border Region. We are deeply grieved over Dr. Kotnis' death, as the Chinese army and people have lost a good

friend and the Indian people a fine fighter. We would like to take this opportunity when Dr. Basu is going back to India to express our gratitude to your Congress and to the Indian people. Now that final victory in the world-wide anti-fascist war is being striven for, we hope that the two nations of India and China will be more closely united than ever before so as to fight alongside other anti-fascist countries to smash fascism and liberate all the peoples who are under the fascist yoke, and at the same time to liberate the Indian and Chinese nations and win independence for these two great nations.

With warmest respects,

Mao Zedong

Zhu De

Message of Sympathy from Zhou Enlai to Dr. Dwarkanath S. Kotnis' Family

March 22, 1943

Dear Friends:

On behalf of the Eighteenth Group Army and the Chinese Communist Party, I extend to you our deepest condolences on the death of Dr. Kotnis. Dr. Kotnis has made an immeasurable contribution in rendering help to the army and people where they needed it most — in the Wutai mountain region behind enemy lines in North China.

In 1938, on instructions from the Indian National Congress, Dr. Kotnis joined the Indian Medical Mission that it sent to China. He arrived in Yan'an and entered the guerrilla areas of North China in 1939. He worked in many places in North China before finally settling down in the Wutai Mountain region to become the late Dr. Norman Bethune's successor. He was the director of the International Peace Hospital until he died. All his Chinese comrades loved and respected him. By carrying out the loftiest of tasks in the anti-Japanese guerrilla base areas

and giving fraternal care to the sick and wounded soldiers, he saved the lives of many soldiers fighting the Japanese aggressors who had invaded our motherland, and he saved many people from becoming permanently disabled. We have benefited immensely from his work, and we will never forget it.

Dr. Kotnis is a symbol of the friendship between the great Chinese and Indian nations and a shining example of the Indian people, who are taking an active part in our common struggles against Japanese militarism and world fascism. His name will live forever in the hearts of the two great nations to whom he dedicated his life.

We share your grief at this loss to all freedom-loving mankind.

Please accept our warmest respects!

Zhou Enlai

In Memory of Dr. D. S. Kotnis

December 30, 1942

Zhu De

In 1938, the Indian National Congress organized an Aid-China Medical Mission which it sent to our country to assist in the War of Resistance. Early in 1939, the mission joined our army and immediately plunged itself into the arduous struggles on the North China battlefield. As a young doctor, Kotnis was very happy to take up the hard work, and he intended to make a thorough study of the experiences in the anti-Japanese war conducted in North China so that he would be able to make some contribution in the national liberation movement when he returned to India. He was most faithful and true to the Indian people's cause of liberation and he was fully aware that such a cause must be linked with the struggles waged by the Chinese and other oppressed peoples for liberation. That was why he regarded China's War of Resistance as a cause of his own and devoted all his efforts to it. He knew very well how great the masses are, and therefore ardently loved the Chinese troops and people who were engaged in the War of Resistance, learned from them with an open mind, and tempered and remoulded himself together with them. He could stand great hardships. On

many occasions he took part in guerrilla warfare in order to learn about the real thing. He continued his work in the thick of fighting, defying all dangers and difficulties. Unfortunately, he died of illness at a young age, when there was plenty of scope for him to display his talents and bring his lofty aspirations into reality. We, along with the Indian people, will cherish his memory forever.

During the difficult years of our War of Resistance, the Indian people sent us their gallant sons who made long journeys of travelling thousands of li to help us. Braving hardships and dangers, Dr. Kotnis persisted in working under most hazardous and gruelling conditions behind the enemy lines and carried out the trust bestowed on him by the Indian people. His noble spirit of internationalism and self-sacrifice is a fine manifestation of the spirit of the Indian nation and will be highly valued and enhanced by the people engaged in the struggle against fascism and the people in the colonies and semi-colonies. Only by relying on such unity among the people can victory be won in the anti-fascist war in the world and in the people's liberation struggles in Asia.

Dr. Kotnis has laid down his life for the anti-fascist war and for the liberation of the Chinese and Indian nations. He will be buried on Chinese soil by the side of thousands of our martyrs and his spirit will always live in the hearts of the Chinese people. Innumerable soldiers will take up his position and continue to fight for the liberation of the Chinese and Indian peoples till the final victory.

Message of Sympathy from Soong Ching Ling to Dr. Dwarkanath S. Kotnis' Family

February 7, 1943

Dear Friends,

I am writing to express my deepest sympathy, and that of all members of the Central Committee of the China Defence League, of which I am chairman, in the loss of your son and brother, Dr. D. S. Kotnis of the Indian National Congress Medical Unit in China, who died on December 9, 1942 while serving the wounded fighters of our armies operating in the rear of the enemy in Hebei Province, North China.

Dr. Kotnis came to China because he wished to place his knowledge and energies at the disposal of our people's fight for national liberation from the Japanese enslavers. He spent four years at the front — on the most active and heroic of all the fronts of the war. The International Peace Hospital, of which he was the director, was founded by the great Canadian doctor and soldier of freedom, Norman Bethune, in 1938 as a token of the solidarity of

all peoples with the men and women who faced bitter privation and a merciless, far stronger enemy in the plains and mountains of North China, because they refused to yield their birth-right to the fascist aggressor. Here Dr. Bethune died in 1939, working to the end. And Dr. Kotnis also worked and died here for the same ideal — the oneness of all peoples fighting for their liberation, for the right to make and shape their own future.

Dr. Bethune was a Canadian, sent by the anti-fascists of his own country and of the United States, first to Spain and then to China, to bind the wounds of the first to fall in the great struggle in which all humanity is now engaged. Dr. Kotnis came from India, sent by the Indian people to serve the same progressive cause. It was not a popular cause then — as it is not everywhere a popular cause now. Those who fought for it were maligned, betrayed, and kept short of the means of battle. Like that of Dr. Bethune, the name of Dr. Kotnis will never be forgotten also by those to whom he brought his skill and the solidarity of his people in their greatest heroic trial. It will never be forgotten also by those of us, of all nationalities, who have always seen every fight for freedom as our own.

Dr. Kotnis leaves behind him a Chinese wife and a child in whom our two peoples have blended. I hope that some day you will see them. I hope also that you will remember your son and brother not only with sorrow but with pride. He gave himself wholly to what he believed in, he did great good, and he lived and died as he wished. His memory belongs not only to your people and to ours but to the noble roll-call of fighters for the freedom and progress of all mankind. The future will honour him even more than the present — because it was for the future.

that he struggled. We, on our part, are proud that from all over the world such men have come to help our fight — recognizing it as the fight of all.

I am sending you, with this letter, some commemorative articles which show the esteem in which he was held by his friends, his comrades and those he helped.

With warmest greeting,

SOONG CHING LING

柯棣华大夫

盛贤功（执笔）

路吉善、张昌满

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AN INDIAN FREEDOM FIGHTER IN CHINA

— A TRIBUTE TO DR. D. S. KOTNIS

Dr. Dwarkanath Shantaram Kotnis, who came to China in 1938 as the youngest of a five-doctor medical mission sent by the Indian National Congress to assist China in the War of Resistance Against Japan, was only 32 when he died at his post as director of the Bethune International Peace Hospital in the Wutai mountain area behind enemy lines in North China on December 9, 1942. During the time he was in China, Dr. Kotnis' hard work and devotion to caring for the sick and wounded soldiers of the Eighth Route Army — despite his increasingly debilitating bouts of epilepsy — earned him the everlasting love and respect of his Chinese comrades. "He will be buried on Chinese soil by the side of thousands of our martyrs and his spirit will always live in the hearts of the Chinese people," Commander-in-Chief Zhu De wrote at the time of his death.

This book, written by Sheng Xiangong, Lu Jishan and Zhang Changman, commemorates the 40th anniversary of Dr. Kotnis' death and is based on reminiscences of those who knew him as well as on his letters, diaries, notes and speeches. It is our hope that the publication of *An Indian Freedom Fighter in China — A Tribute to Dr. D. S. Kotnis* will add a new page to the annals of friendship between the two peoples — Indian and Chinese — to whom Dr. Kotnis dedicated his life.